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Jordan seeks to free detainees in Iraq

AMMAN (R) — Jordan is seeking the release of up to 700 Jordanian detainees held in Iraqi jails, officials and diplomats said on Monday. Most of the prisoners have not been convicted by courts. They are being held for reasons including leaving Iraq with dinars, considered by Baghdad as smuggling. Officials said the detainees plight was raised in talks with Iraqi Deputy Prime Minister Tareq Aziz, Foreign Minister Mohammad Saeed Sahaf and Interior Minister Watban Al Hassan, half brother of Iraqi President Saddam Hussein. "We have been raising the issue of these detainees with Iraq for months as we believe most of them have been held for unfair reasons," said a Jordanian government official. "We finally got a promise from Iraq that they would study the files of all detainees and in light of that, they would decide what measures to take." Arab diplomats said Jordan's ambassador in Iraq visited the detainees recently after trying for months, an indication Baghdad might show some flexibility. "Their living conditions are not any better from those of ordinary Iraqis suffering under sanctions and poverty," said one diplomat familiar with conditions inside Iraqi jails.

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Israel, PLO, Jordan and Egypt to meet

CAIRO (AFP) — Israel, Jordan and the Palestinians will meet with Egypt here on Tuesday in multilateral trade talks on proposals for a regional business council, an Egyptian Foreign Ministry official said. The four are gathering as part of the trade commission of the Regional Economic Development Working Group (REDWIG) launched along with Arab-Israeli talks at the October 1991 Madrid peace conference, Deputy Assistant Foreign Minister Ru'uf Saad told AFP on Monday. "The REDWIG negotiations will explore the most appropriate mechanism to establish the regional council of the businessmen recommended by the Casablanca summit" on economic development in last October and November," Mr. Saad said.

Saddam replaces agriculture chief

BAGHDAD (AFP) — Iraqi President Saddam Hussein has dismissed Agriculture Minister Karim Hassan Rida appointing his advisor Khaled Abdul Monem Rashid to the post on Monday, the official agency INA reported. INA did not specify why Mr. Rida had been replaced after taking over the position in May 1994. President Saddam also chairs the cabinet.

Cairo releases Brotherhood activist

CAIRO (AFP) — Egyptian state prosecutors Monday freed a member of the Muslim Brotherhood but extended the custody of two other members of the fundamentalist movement, judicial officials said. Abdul Khalek Hassan Abdul Wahab was freed on condition that he remain in Egypt, while Ezzeddin Sabet and Ibrahim Al Bayumi were given 15 extra days of detention.

Syria to send 2,000 teachers to Kuwait

DAMASCUS (AFP) — Two thousand Syrian school teachers will soon go to work in Kuwait, in line with an accord signed by the two countries' education ministers, officials said here Monday. A Kuwaiti committee will visit Syria next month to select the teachers, the officials said.

Egypt seeks funds held in Iraq

CAIRO (AFP) — An Egyptian official will go to Geneva Tuesday in a bid to secure nearly $500 million owed to thousands of Egyptian workers which has been held in Iraq since the 1991 Gulf war. Tilan Allam, a senior Foreign Ministry official, will attend a meeting of a U.N. arbitration committee Wednesday and Thursday, authorities said here. Egypt and Iraq signed an accord in 1989 to regulate transfers of Egyptians' earnings. It set a ceiling of $15 million every 10 days. However, Iraqi banks halted the transfers during the August 1990-February 1991 Gulf crisis.

Europeans join Libyan protest

TRIPOLI (R) — European activists joined Libyans on Monday in front of the U.N. office in Tripoli to protest against a 1986 U.S. raid on Libya. "We are 250 people mainly from Italy but also from France, Spain, Malta, Britain, Portugal, Germany and Belgium to commemorate with the Libyans the 9th anniversary of the U.S. bombing," said Nino Pasti, spokesman for the Italian peace organisation Nino Pasti International Foundation. "It is a shame for the U.N. to become an instrument of oppression from a superpower," Mr. Pasti told Reuters, referring to the U.N. Security Council's refusal to discuss the U.S. raid.

Hamas and PLO meet on violence

OCCUPIED JERUSALEM (Agencies) — The Palestinian National Authority (PNA) and its Hamas rivals are meeting secretly to reach an accord to prevent anti-Israeli attacks that are holding up peace moves, Hamas and Palestine Liberation Organisation (PLO) officials said on Monday.

They said the two sides met on Sunday.

One PLO official said the meeting was "very positive."

The talks were hosted by PNA member Zakaria Al Agha.

"There was understanding and readiness from all sides to work for the interests of the Palestinian people," Mr. Agha said when asked whether Hamas had responded to calls to halt armed attacks.

Hamas leader Sayed Abu Musameh told Reuters: "Yesterday's meeting was within the framework of cooling tensions. It is wrong to boycott."

He declined to say whether Hamas agreed to suspend attacks from Palestinian self-rule areas.

PLO Chairman Yasser Arafat, who heads the PNA, vowed to get tough with Hamas and Islamic Jihad — both militant groups opposed to his peace deal with Israel — after their suicidie bombings in self-ruled Gaza last week killed eight Jews.

Mr. Arafat's security forces arrested hundreds and sentenced five members of the groups in a Gaza military court.

On Sunday Mr. Arafat called for a national dialogue but demanded the two groups limit themselves to peaceful means in opposing the 1993 peace deal which gave Palestinians self-rule in Gaza and in the West Bank town of Jericho.

Mr. Arafat told a crowd of 20,000 at Gaza City's Yarmouk soccer stadium that the militants' attacks on Israelis only undermine the Palestinians' own goals.

"I am telling my brothers yes to national dialogue, but only on the basis of their commitment to what the PLO signed," he said.

Mr. Arafat said the militants handed the Israelis a pretext for the delays.

"There is a movement in Israel that wants to delay and kill the agreement and the Palestinian dream and I must say that there are people here that are giving the Israelis the chance to use security as their excuse," Mr. Arafat said.

"Israel is delaying the whole thing under many pretenses and the most dangerous one is that of their security. Each time they say security, security, security," Mr. Arafat said.

Prime Minister Yitzhak Rabin said Sunday that Mr. Arafat's recent steps against the militants do not satisfy Israel.

"The Palestinians have the ability to do more and we demand this," Mr. Rabin told Israel Television. "We will judge them by this."

"The gathering at Yarmouk stadium marked the seventh anniversary of the death of Mr. Arafat's PLO second-in-command Khalil Wazir, better known as Abu Jihad. His shooting death at his home in Tunis was widely blamed on Israeli commandos, but Israel has never confirmed any involvement.

Israel and the PLO say they hope to reach a deal by July 1 on extending self-rule to other parts of the West Bank. Israel has made such an agreement contingent on Mr. Arafat doing more to stop Hamas and Islamic Jihad attacks.

"The authority demands from Hamas respect of the PLO-Israel accord. It does not ask them to accept it, nor to be committed to it, but to refrain from carrying out attacks from and inside self-rule areas," one PLO official said.

"They can oppose as much

(Continued on page 7)

KING VISITS GHQ: His Majesty King Hussein, the Supreme Commander of the Armed Forces, on Monday visited the General Headquarters (GHQ) where he was received by Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff General Abdul Hafez Mirai, the chief of staff of the land forces, assistants to the chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff and the chief of staff of the Royal Air Force. King Hussein, who was accompanied on the visit by His Royal Highness Prince Hamzeh Ben Al Hussein, discussed with Gen. Mirai issues of concern to the Armed Forces (Armed Forces photo)

PNA accuses Israelis of cold-blooded killing in Hebron

GAZA CITY (Agencies) — The Palestine National Authority (PNA) charged Monday that the Israeli army had murdered three Palestinians in cold blood and called for a ceasefire.

"I am shocked by this tragedy," said Nabil Shaath, the chief Palestinian peace negotiator and minister for international cooperation.

"Three martyrs were assassinated in Hebron. It was a cold-blooded killing.

I condemn it. We want peace and security for both sides. We want a ceasefire.

"We demand that Israel respect human rights and human life," Dr. Shaath said.

People must be judged if they have done something reprehensible, it is intolerable to kill them in cold blood.

"It has to stop immediately, particularly in Hebron, the town which still bears the scars of the mosque massacre carried out by Goldstein."

Jewish settler Baruch Goldstein killed at least 30 Moslims in the occupied West Bank town's Ibrahimi Mosque in February 1994.

Troops maintained a strict curfew on Palestinians in Hebron on Monday fearing revenge attacks over the killing.

The army deployed reinforcements, set up more roadblocks and made searches and identity checks, a day after undercover agents shot dead the three.

Hundreds of Jews made a Passover holiday pilgrimage to the Ibrahimi Mosque.

The shrine, holy to Muslims and Jews, was closed to Muslims for the Jewish festival. During the fasting month of Ramadan, which ended several weeks ago, the site was closed to Jews during selected days.

Israeli undercover forces riddled with bullets a car carrying the three Palestinians in Hebron.

The army, which declined to say who shot first in what it described as a gunbattle, said two of the men had been on its most wanted list and belonged to the military wing of Hamas.

Dr. Shaath, a senior peace negotiator, called in the statement for a halt to attacks against Israelis.

PNA President Yasser Arafat, who forged a peace deal with Israel in 1993, has demanded that Hamas abandon violence and accept the accord as a condition for opening a national dialogue among Palestinians.

Mr. Arafat's police arrested scores of militants after eight Jews were killed in a suicide bombing in self-ruled Gaza on April 9. The authority also has begun bringing activists from Hamas and the Islamic Jihad group to trial.

Israel has made an agreement on expanding autonomy beyond Gaza and the West Bank town of Jericho contingent on Mr. Arafat ending such attacks.

In Ramallah, Israeli soldiers beat Palestinian demonstrators and detained 13 on Monday during a march for the release of thousands of prisoners held by Israel, witnesses said.

The demonstration in the town of Ramallah was one of several protests organised throughout the West Bank and Gaza by the Palestinian Prisoners Club — an ad-hoc group fighting for prisoners' release — to mark an annual Prisoners Day.

Israel released about 5,000 Palestinian prisoners under its peace deal with the Palestine Liberation Organisation (PLO). But at least 6,000 more remain in jail while talks on expanding self-rule drag on.

Witnesses in Ramallah said Israeli soldiers surrounded some 100 men and women marching with placards and

(Continued on page 7)

Baghdad demands release of assets

NICOSIA (Agencies) — Iraq's foreign minister says that Iraqi assets worth $4 billion, frozen after Iraq invaded Kuwait in 1990, should be released so that Baghdad can buy food and medicine for the country's 20 million long-suffering people.

In an interview with the state-run Baghdad Radio broadcast Sunday night, Mohammad Saed Al Sahaf said that Iraq insists that U.N. trade sanctions imposed in 1990 should also be lifted.

He reiterated Baghdad's rejection of a U.N. Security Council offer to allow Iraq to sell oil worth $4 billion a year for humanitarian purposes.

The council unanimously approved that offer, proposed by the United States and Britain, on April 14.

Mr. Sahaf declared: "According to the logic that produced the resolution, they should now unfreeze the Iraqi assets if there is a humanitarian action framework. Iraq has more than $4 billion frozen in their banks."

"We will not deviate. The Americans, with all their malice, will not be able to force Iraq, and those who sympathise with it, to deviate from the basic and primary demand," that the crippling sanctions be lifted completely, he said.

Before the Security Council voted, Iraqi Foreign Minister Tareq Aziz said Baghdad might reconsider the proposed offer if unspecified amendments were made.

But it is unlikely that the Security Council is prepared to make any further concessions to Baghdad following its rejection of the offer of limited oil sales to purchase food and medicine.

Russia and France, which have been campaigning for the U.N. embargo to be lifted, voted for the oil sales offer and Baghdad's rejection has left them with little room for manoeuvre.

There is unlikely to be any progress towards easing the sanctions until Baghdad gets a clean bill of health from Rolf Ekeus, chief of the U.N. Special Commission responsible for overseeing the destruction of Iraq's weapons of mass destruction.

Mr. Ekeus reported to the Security Council April 10 that Iraq's nuclear, missile and chemical weapons programme have been essentially eliminated, but stressed that Iraq may still be trying to produce biological weapons.

"The Iraqi people and all honest people in the Arab World and elsewhere reject the new resolution which only serves U.S. interests and deprives the Iraqis of their legitimate right to export their own oil," said Vice-President Taha Yassin Ramadan, quoted by the official Iraqi News Agency.

If Iraq accepted U.N. Resolution 986, "the United States and its allies would have the chance to achieve their hostile objectives, including seizure of Iraq's oil riches," he said.

Mr. Ramadan said the resolution was "designed by the United States to mislead international opinion, as usual."

"It does not secure the essential needs of the Iraqi people, implies a division of the country and represents flagrant interference in Iraq's internal affairs," he said.

Parliamentary Speaker Saadi Mehdi Saleh, chairing a meeting of parliamentary committees to study the resolution Sunday, said it set "a serious precedent in international relations."

The resolution was "an attack on Iraq's sovereignty, threatening the unity of its people and their security."

Earlier state television said the cabinet, chaired by President Saddam Hussein, agreed unanimously to "reject categorically the resolution because it dangerously strikes a blow at Iraq's sovereignty."

Oil prices shot back up towards eight-month highs on Monday after Iraq rejected the United Nations resolution.

Turkey reports 24 rebels killed, ousts 11 Germans

TUNCELI (Agencies) — Troops pressed their offensive against Kurdish rebel hideouts, killing 24 guerrillas in a mountain pass, officials said Monday.

The regional governor's office said the rebels were killed Sunday. News reports said 75 rebels were killed in the area last week.

About 20,000 Turkish troops, backed by helicopters and jet fighters, have attacked rebels for the past month in southeastern Turkey. Kurdish rebels have been fighting for autonomy in the region since 1984.

About 500 Kurdish rebels are believed to operate out of Tunceli under the command of a leading guerrilla figure, Sendin Sakik.

Turkey sent 35,000 troops into northern Iraq last month to try to wipe out Kurdish Labour Party (PKK) camps used for hit-and-run attack.

The Turkish military says they have killed 464 rebels so far, and have lost 56 of their own troops in northern Iraq. Turkey's National Security Council (NSC) has recommended pulling Turkish troops out of northern Iraq by mid-May.

Prime Minister Tansu Ciller also indicated pullout plans were under way. "I believe the withdrawal process will take place next month," she told Turkish reporters in New York on Sunday, according to the Anatolia news agency.

In Diyarbakir, a court ordered the expulsion of 11 Germans who were arrested during a demonstration in Silvan, about 90 kilometres east of Diyarbakir.

The Germans, a group of social workers, politicians and a journalist, were protesting Sunday what they claimed was an army raid and arrest of 80 people in the nearby Kurdish village of Kurucayir. Officials said eight people were arrested in the village on Saturday.

The Germans were taken by Turkish authorities to the airport in Istanbul for a flight out of the country, said Mehmet Bayval at the activists' coordination centre in Frankfurt, Germany.

Turkish laws require permission from local authorities before holding a demonstration.

Also in Diyarbakir, Turkish court released four human rights activists accused of Kurdish separatism after three months in jail in the southeastern province.

The group, which included three lawyers, were members of the local branch of independent Human Rights Association. The charges against them still stand. They face up to 10 years in jail if convicted of the charge, which stems from a book on human rights in southeastern Turkey.

Military officials said meanwhile the PKK regional commander, Semdin Sakik — known as "Fingerless Zeki" after losing a thumb while firing a rocket — might be dead or wounded as he had not answered radio messages from other rebel units and PKK leader Abdullah Ocalan for the last three days.

A big winter offensive failed to oust the rebels from their mountain hideouts in Tunceli province, known to Kurds as part of the Dersim region which gave its name to a bloody 1936-38 uprising led by Kurdish Muslim clerics.

Turkey's emergency rule governor in the southeast, Unal Erkan, arrived in Tunceli on Monday morning with a large team of Turkish journalists. They were due to go to the ravine area.

"Once we get Sakik, one of the last PKK leaders holding out inside Turkey, the rest will surrender," an officer said on Sunday.

NPT debate opens with call for end to nuclear arms

UNITED NATIONS (Agencies) — U.N. Secretary General Boutros Ghali, opening the nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty (NPT) renewal conference Monday, urged the elimination of all nuclear weapons.

"The most safe, sure and swift way to deal with the threat of nuclear arms is to do away with them in every regard. This should be our vision of the future," he told representatives of the 178 NPT signatories gathered for the four-week meeting.

Since the expiring 25-year NPT treaty to support nuclear controls and safeguards took effect in March 1970, he said, "in many ways, the world has become a safer place."

"But in other ways, today's world is one of increasing danger," he added, citing unidentified countries that are "ignoring their ratification" of the NPT.

Extremist groups' possessing weapons of mass destruction pose "another terrible risk," he said. "The smuggling of nuclear material is no longer only a fear, but also a frightening reality."

Dr. Ghali reminded the delegates of the 1978 commitment by the General Assembly that called for an end to the proliferation of nuclear weapons and for their eventual total elimination.

The secretary general stressed that their decisions made here "will help to define the character of international cooperation for the 21st century."

He singled out three goals for the delegates' attention: improved security assurances to non-nuclear weapons states, advancement of nuclear disarmament and better transfer of nuclear technology for peaceful purposes.

Delegates will vote on extending the treaty at the end of the conference on May 12.

The United States and other nuclear powers want an indefinite and unconditional extension of the treaty, designed to block the spread of atomic arms.

But some in the Third World prefer only a limited extension, and want to attach conditions, such as greater progress in reducing nuclear arsenals.

Addresses by Dr. Ghali and U.S. Secretary of State Warren Christopher topped the first day's agenda, along with remarks by Hans Blix, head of the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA), which administers the treaty.

The IAEA is taking steps to toughen its inspection regime for detecting clandestine nuclear-weapons programmes. The weakness of that regime, seen in Iraq's near-successful effort to build an atomic bomb, has been a principal flaw in the NPT system.

Meeting with reporters last week, the chief U.S. arms-control official, John Holum, called renewing the pact a "fundamentally historic decision."

"If you want to think about how important it is.... think of what New York would have looked like if the world trade centre bombers had manged to acquire even primitive nuclear devices," Mr. Holum told reporters.

The 1970 pact struck a historic bargain among the world's nations.

The 176 signatory governments are committed to preventing the spread of nuclear weapons beyond five nations that acknowledge having them — the United States, Russia, Britain, France and China. In exchange, the five are pledged to work towards eliminating all nuclear arms.

The treaty also guaranteed nations the right to develop peaceful nuclear technology under international oversight.

The treaty is credited with lessening the likelihood of a nuclear free-for-all in the world. But its failures are well-known: three nations that did not sign it — Israel, India and Pakistan — have developed nuclear-weapons capability.

Many non-nuclear nations complain, too, that the five nuclear weapons states have balked at meeting the treaty's "Article VI" commitment — to move in good faith towards total disarmament.

The treaty had only a 25-year guaranteed run. The pact itself specified that in 1995 the signatories would have to decide whether to extend it indefinitely, or for a fixed period or periods.

U.S., China clash over nuclear deal with Iran

NEW YORK (Agencies) — U.S. Secretary of State Warren Christopher and Chinese Foreign Minister Qian Qichen clashed on Monday over a reported Chinese nuclear deal with Iran.

Mr. Christopher told reporters before talks with Mr. Qian that he would be telling the minister nuclear cooperation with Tehran was "too dangerous to justify." But Mr. Qian said nothing Beijing was doing conflicted with international law.

"We respect the views of the United States," Mr. Qian said. "But what we are doing is consistent with international practice."

Mr. Christopher and Mr. Qian were meeting on the fringes of a U.N. conference on the nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty (NPT) that was due to open later on Monday.

Neither man referred to a specific Chinese deal with Iran, but the Washington Post reported on Monday that China was planning to build two 300-megawatt pressurised water reactors in Iran and transfer associated know-how.

"Our position is one that Iran is... simply too dangerous with its intentions and its motives and its designs to justify nuclear cooperation of an allegedly peaceful character," Mr. Christopher said. "I hope to have an opportunity to talk further with the (Chinese) minister on this subject."

But Mr. Qian, standing next to Mr. Christopher, said through an interpreter that there was no international law or agreement against peaceful nuclear cooperation with other countries. "We respect the view of the United States but what we (have) done is consistent with the international practice," he said.

According to the Post, the Sino-Iranian agreement, which is still being negotiated, could be similar to that signed in January between Russia and Iran and denounced by the U.S. government.

The agreement concerns the construction of two 300 megawatt reactors in Iran and the transfer of Chinese technology.

"China is technically not doing anything that conflicts with the NPT and its international obligations. But we have the same kind of concern... (and) we think it would be in their best self-interest (to cancel further negotiations)," a senior official was quoted as saying.

China maintains that it is only taking part in peaceful cooperation with Iran, the paper said.

It added that Chinese technicians had also given Iran advice on the extraction of uranium and discussed technological aid to help Iran develop its own nuclear fuels.

The newspaper stated that under the terms of the Sino-Iranian agreement being negotiated the reactors and fuel would be subject to international inspection.

But Washington is concerned because any increase in Iran's nuclear capacity could facilitate secret efforts in Tehran to develop nuclear weapons.

Given its vast oil reserves it was difficult for Iran to justify a need for nuclear energy, officials told the Post.

A senior official said the Chinese response to Mr. Christopher's objections would influence Washington's decision on the implementation of an agreement on nuclear cooperation recently signed in Beijing by U.S. Energy Secretary Hazel O'Leary.

New generation of Palestinians train as 'human bombs'

'AIN HELWEH, Lebanon (AFP) — Forty young Palestinians in Lebanon's largest refugee camp are training to become "human bombs" as Islamic militants prepare a new generation of martyrs to blow up Israeli targets.

The "lion cubs" as they are called, some as young as 14 and mostly orphans, undergo rigorous weapons training using live ammunition in 'Ain Helweh camp to turn them into future suicide bombers.

"I am not scared of dying, I want to free Palestine," said one young recruit, 15-year-old Ibrahim Khald.

Their trainer, Munir Maqdah, is a recent but committed convert to the militant fight against Israel. A dissident from Yasser Arafat's Fateh faction, Colonel Maqdah now controls the camp, the biggest in Lebanon.

He believes Palestinian youngsters, who once were content to throw stones in the seven-year intifada against Israeli occupation launched in 1987, have to move on to more bloody methods.

"We are preparing human bombs because it is the only language the enemy understands," the bearded 37-year-old also known as Abu Hassan told AFP.

"The Israelis want to shatter the Palestinian dream, but we are retaliating by training a new generation of fighters."

A wave of suicide-bombings has terrorised Israel in the past year when 56 Israelis died in attacks inside the Jewish state, according to police figures.

Abu Hassan fired between the legs of bis young recruits to test their nerve. Dressed in combat fatigues with helmets covering their shaved heads, they crawled across the sandy ground with Kalashnikov rifles in their hands.

"For these youths the Palestinian revolution began on September 13, 1993," the day Israel and the PLO signed the Declaration of Principles on autonomy in Washington, Abu Hassan said.

"We will continue to raise them and turn them into martyrs until the end of the Israeli occupation.

He is aided by a "sheikh lieutenant" called Jamal who is responsible for firing the young suicide-bombers with religious conviction.

"We are preparing them for Jihad, the holy war of Islam, and to love death to this end. They will have just one choice — victory or martyrdom," the 30-year-old said.

"With God's grace they will become bombs."

Their training, which began two months ago, was to finish on Monday. Abu Hassan said it would mark "the promotion of the intifada, the front line of the new generation."

Elsewhere in the camp more "lieutenants" explained to a group of teenagers how to handle explosives and to fight face-to-face. Many have lost relatives in clashes with Israel over the years.

Ibrahim told how his father went missing after the Israeli invasion of Lebanon in 1982. The father of Mohammad, 14, was killed three years ago in an Israeli air raid.

Fifteen-year-old Ayman lost his father and his brother, both anti-Israeli fighters, during another air raid.

"My greatest wish is to follow in their footsteps and be sent on a mission in Palestine when I finish my training," Mr. Ayman said with child-like conviction. "I will do whatever my leaders ask."

Under the watchful eye of a guard, the youths said they were "happy to know that other young people are fighting like us, over there in the occupied homeland."

The Islamic Resistance Movemeot, Hamas, and Islamic Jihad claimed two suicide bombings in the Gaza Strip a week ago which killed seven Israeli soldiers and an American woman and wounded 50 more.

Mr. Arafat's self-rule police launched a huge crackdown on radical groups, arresting at least 200 members and ordering militants to disarm. . .

But the head of Islamic Jihad, Fathi Shakaki, warned Saturday that "the waiting lists for suicide attacks have thousands of names."

"The attacks will continue as long as the Israeli occupation remains in force," he said in Beirut.

6 UNIFIL officers removed

TYRE (Agencies) — Six U.N. officers have been transferred after causing an uproar by attending Israeli army exercises in the occupied sector of South Lebanon without permission, U.N. sources said Monday.

General Stanislaw Wozniak, commander of the 5,000-strong U.N. Interim Force in Lebanon (UNIFIL), ordered the disciplinary action apparently to defuse the controversy after guerrilla leaders and politicians denounced the officers' presence at the manoeuvres as tantamount to recognition of Israel's occupation of the border enclave.

Officials with the U.N. peacekeeping force say that two officers from the Norwegian battalion and four from another U.N formation, observer Gronp Lebanon, attended the exercises by Israeli troops and their militia allies of the South Lebanon Army (SLA) last Tuesday on their own initiative.

"As a result of their unauthorised attendance, the force commander took immediate action, transferring from the south those who were involved," one U.N. source said Monday.

The sources, speaking oo condition of anooymity, declined to say whether the officers were sent home or to other U.N. missions.

The sources said the fouir observer force officers were from Denmark, Finland, Austria and the Netherlands.

Defence Minister Mohseo Dalloul has expressed fears that tbe U.N. officers' attendance last week of the wargames at Majidiyyeh village "was a sign of complete and blind bias which breaches the mission of those officers."

"This matter must be followed up and the situation of the United Nations forces and its mission sbould be reconsidered," Mr. Dalloul said on Sunday.

UNIFIL was deployed in South Lebanon in 1978 after a 91-day Israeli invasion. The troops from nine nations police a U.N. zone that overlaps the Israeli-occupied enclave.

Observer Group Lebanon's mission is to monitor the 1948 armistice agreement between Lebanon and Israel.

ARRESTS IN RAMALLAH: Israeli borderguards arrest Palestinians following a protest held by the Association for the Release of Palestinian Prisoners in the West Bank town of Ramallah on Monday (AFP photo)

Dig halted at 'tomb of Alexander'

CAIRO (AFP) — An archaeological team has suspended work for the summer at a site in the Siwa oasis in Egypt's western desert claimed to be the lost tomb of Alexander the Great.

The head of Egypt's Supreme Council for Antiquities, Abdul Halim Nureddin, told AFP Sunday the dig "has not been abandoned — it will continue in October."

He said the desert site, 750 kilometres west of Cairo, was becoming very hot.

"We have to assess all the material discovered and see the results of electromagnetic studies" of the site, being analysed in Canada, Mr. Nureddin said, without giving further details.

The head of the team, Liana Souvaltzi, returned to Greece on Friday.

Mr. Nureddin sparked a controversy in January when he announced that the largely Greek team had discovered the tomb of the Macedonian conqueror, long tbought to have been buried in the Mediterranean port city of Alexandria.

Ms. Souvaltzi has vowed to find the remains of the deified king, despite a storm of criticism from other archaeologists and Greek nationalists.

Meanwhile, the Egyptian government has revived a controversial plan to build a road tunnel at the site of the pyramids of Giza, despite earlier agreeing to move the route away from the historic site, officials said.

Reconstruction Minister Mohammad Ibrahim Suleiman presented President Hosni Mubarak with a proposal Saturday for a tunnel under the pyramids plateau, the minister's spokesman Hisham Amin told AFP.

He said the exact location of the road tunnel, forming part of an almost completed motorway encircling Cairo, would be determined in later studies.

The pyramids site is the only one of seven wonders of the ancient world still in existence.

In December the U.N. Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organisation (UNESCO) rejected an earlier tunnel proposal to replace the motorway passing 2.5 kilometres south of the pyramids, which it said endangered the monuments.

UNESCO threatened to remove the pyramids from its World Heritage list if the danger is not eliminated.

Hizbollah will go after SLA even after peace

BEIRUT (AP) — The leader of guerrillas fighting Israel's occupation of a border enclave said Sunday collaborators would be hunted down and killed even after a peace settlement.

Sheikh Hassan Nasrallah's threat appeared likely to complicate negotiations over an Israeli withdrawal from its so-called "security zone" in Soutb Lebanon, a key Lebanese condition for peace.

The zone is patrolled by Israeli troops aided by militiamen of the surrogate South Lebanon Army (SLA), who are considered traitors by the Shiite Muslim group Hizbollah.

"The Islamic Resistance will finish them off before or after a settlement," Sheikh Nasrallah said at a memorial for a guerilla killed in South Lebanon last week.

"There will be no mercy on family or sectarian lines. They all belong to one sect, tbe sect of treason. Their death is an irrevocable decision," Sheikh Nasrallah said in a speech carried by Hizbollah's television station.

However, repeating a call for SLA fighters to surrender, Sheikh Nasrallh added: "The door to repentance is open."

Israel has demanded the Lebanese government disarm Iran-backed Hizbollah guerrillas and guarantee safety of SLA militiamen and their families as part of a peace deal. It also wants the SLA to be integrated into the Lebanese army.

The Lebanese government says it will not curb the guerrillas before an unconditional Israeli withdrawal from the 1,100-square-kilometre enclave Israel maintains against cross-border strikes since 1985.

Lebanese Defence Minister Mohsen Dalloul has said collaborators with Israel should stand trial for treason.

Hizbollah is leading the guerrilla war to evict 1,200 Israeli soldiers and 2,500 allies of the locally recruited SLA from the enclave, which has a predominantly Shiite population of 200,000.

While the SLA is commanded by a Christian, Antoine Lahd, its rank and file are mostly Shiites.

The SLA, which is armed, trained and paid by the Israelis to help patrol the "security zone," is the largest employer in the region.

Some SLA defectors have claimed they were either forced to join, fearing reprisals or lured by the income by about $300 a month for each member in the impoverished enclave.

NEWS IN BRIEF

7-year-old accidentally crosses border

TEL AVIV (AP) — Israeli soldiers found and unusual infiltrator Sunday, a seven-year-old Syrian boy who accidentally crossed the frontier, the army said. The soldiers took care of the boy before returning him to Syria, an army spokesman added. Infiltrattons from Syria are rare and there were no further details on the incident.

British Arabist Henderson dies

ABU DHABI (AP) — Edward Henderson, a noted British Arabist and London's first ambassador to Qatar, has died. He was 77. Henderson died of old age last week in Qatar, his friend, Peter Hellyer, managing editor of Emirates news newspaper, said Sunday. Henderson graduated from Oxford in 1940. He fought at Dunkirk in World War II and then served in Jordan and Syria. Henderson, who also witnessed the British withdrawal from Palestine in 1948, lived among the Arabs, particularly the bedouins, and their love was mutual, according to Mr. Hellyer. Henderson wrote his memoirs in 1988, titled "The Strange Eventful History." His funeral is to be held in England this week. He lived the last years of his life in Abu Dhabi with his wife Jocelyn, working at the Centre for Document and Research which he set up. The UAE president, Sheikh Zayed Ben Sultan Al Nahayan, is reputed to have said of Henderson: "We have seen many devoted British friends, but this man, Edward Henderson, is the best. He is sincere, kind and loves us as we love him."

Sudan boosts relations with Russia

KHARTOUM (AP) — Sudan and Russia agreed Sunday to step up economic cooperation as the second stage of a plan that also includes improved military ties. The decision to work out economic, commercial and technical accords came in talks here between Russian Deputy Foreign Minister Victor Poskvalyuk and Sudan's vice president, Major General Zubair Mohammad Salih, the official Sudanese News Agency (SUNA) reported. A high-level Sundanese delegation is to visit Moscow in May to sign the agreements. SUNA said. Mr. Poskvalyuk's team is the second high-level Russian delegation to visit Sudan this month. A military delegation ended a four-day visit April 6 with a pledge to revive Russian military assistance. The Soviet Union provided Sudan with arms and other equipment, including MiG-17 fighter jets and missiles, until 1971. Relations then began to sour after junior Sudanese officers with links to the Communist Party detained then-president Gaafar Numeiri and tried to impose a socialist regime. Numeiri escaped and, with Egyptian and Libyan help, rallied to defeat the rebels.

Indonesia seeks aid from Kuwait

JAKARTA (AP) — President Suharto on Monday asked Kuwait to consider giving aid to Indonesia, whose development plan has been hampered by inadequate infrastructure. Mr. Suharto made the request during a meeting with Kuwait's prime minister, Sheikh Saad Al Abdallah Al Salem Al Sabah, who also is the Kuwaiti crown prince. Briefing reporters on the meeting, State Secretariat Minister Murdiono said Mr. Suharto specifically mentioned the state-owned aircraft factory, which needs funds to begin exporting its new turboprop jets on credit. Sheikh Saad will visit the aircraft factory Tuesday in the west Java capital of Bandung. Sheikh Saad said Kuwait wants to invest in oil refinery and bridges projects in Indonesia, Mr. Murdiono reported. He said senior officials of the two countries will meet again Tuesday to cootinue discussions on political and economic issues. The two leaders also touched on the latest development in the Middle East including the latest developments in Iraq.

Sri Lankan maid executed in UAE

ABU DHABI (AFP) — A Sri Lankan housemaid has been executed in the United Arab Emirates (UAE) for murdering the four-year-old daughter of her employer, legal officials said on Monday.

Sirri Mohammad Faruq was executed by a firing squad in the northern emirate of Ras Al Khaimah on Thursday after she confessed to stabbing the child to death with a sharp object on Oct. 17, they said.

The Islamic court sentenced her to death in January and the verdict was endorsed by the emirate's ruler, Sheikh Saqr Ibn Mohammad Al Qassimi.

Judge Mohammad Dawoud, who sentenced the maid on Jan. 17, said she had pleaded guilty to the murder of Moza Said Salim.

"She confessed to the killing of the girl and was sentenced in accordance with Islamic law," the judge told AFP by telephone from Ras Al Khaimah, about 300 kilometres from Abu Dhabi.

"Her life could have been saved and the sentence could have been amended if the victim's parents had forgiven her. But they insisted on the death punishment according to Sharia (Islamic law)."

Court records showed the maid, in her 20s, bad admitted she used a sharp steel key to stab the child in the chest and other parts of her body after she failed to resuscitate her when she had a fit.

"The child was unconscious, her body was shaking and saliva was oozing out of her mouth. I could not make her come round.

"I was frightened and unconsciously I pulled out the key and started to stab her," Sirri reportedly told court in the emirate, which strictly enforces Islamic Law.

She said she then wrapped the child's body with a piece of cloth, crammed it into a box and hurled her under a nearby deserted house.

Forensic reports did not mention whether the child suffered from epilepsy or other ailments, but showed death was due to heart failure caused by massive internal bleeding in the chest.

"We had given the maid the right to appeal. She did appeal but that court supported the death sentence," Mr. Dawoud said.

Sri Lankan embassy officials said they had tried to help Sirri and bad seen her in prison several times before execution.

"We feel that she should not have killed the child and she herself felt very sorry and depressed.

"We had tried to help her by making an appeal but as you know she is a Muslim and the sentence was issued in accordance with Islamic law," an embassy spokesman told AFP.

He said embassy representatives were in Ras Al Khaimah on Monday to discuss arrangements for repatriating the maid's body.

In a separate case in the UAE, a Filipina housemaid has been on trial in the city of Al 'Ain on charges of murdering her local employer after he allegedly attacked her and tried to rape her.

Algerian president vows to fight violence

ALGIERS (Agencies) — Algerian President Liamine Zeroual pledged to fight violence by Algeria's armed Islamic groups during a weekend meeting with political parties to discuss this year's presidential election.

Presidential spokesman Mihoub Mihoubi on Sunday quoted the president as telling 15 parties and organisations on Saturday that "the anti-terrorist struggle is continuing and will continue."

The country has been torn by three years of violent attacks here by Islamic fundamentalists targeting intellectuals, journalists and teachers which bas left 30,000 people dead.

"Those who assume responsibility for terrorism bave refused to make the slightest effort to stop it," Mr. Mihoubi quoted the president as saying.

Mr. Zeroual was referring to two Islamie Salvation Front (FIS) leaders sentenced to 12 years in prison but placed under house arrest in hopes they would appeal to armed Islamic groups to stop their attacks. They bave reportedly been returned to prison.

President Zeroual also reiterated that presidential elections would take place as planned before the end of the year despite opposition from four parties, said Mr. Miboubi

"The presidential vote has been scheduled and will take place because Algeria cannot surrender to a permanent political crisis," the president reportedly said.

The four parties calling for a delay signed in January a so-called "national contract" — a platform for talks with the government drawn up at a meeting in Rome, and rejected by Algeria's military-backed regime.

The four are the National Liberation Front (FLN, the former ruling party), tbe Socialist Forces' Front (FFS), the Movement for Democracy in Algeria (MDA) and the Islamic Resistance Movement (MRI-Al Nahda).

The communist Al Ithahadi movement has also said it opposed elections.

Another party which he did not name remained "sceptical," said Mr. Mihoubi.

But five parties and four civilian organisations including the powerful UGTA trade nnion had backed the idea of an election, said Mr. Mihoubi.

Sinee Marcb 27, Mr. Zeroual has held meetings with 11 parties and four organisations to discuss conditions for bolding an election.

Islamic extremists began a virtual civil war against the secular regime after the government cancelled a 1992 general election tbe now-outlawed FIS was poised to win.

The army, in a separate statement, said rebels had suffered "stiff blows" and were now trapped like a "rat locked inside an electrified iron cage."

Mr. Zeroual, in a statement after he met political groups concerning plans for a presidential election later this year, said: "It is for those who opted for crime and destruction against the nation to stop these acts."

At this moment, and only at this moment, all prospects will be opened for national reconciliation with all the parties," Mr. Zeroual said in the statement carried by the national news Agency APS.

"The state is still awaiting every sincere initiative, authentically Algerian and constructive to end the bloodshed of Algerians," Mr. Zeroual, who has pledged to hold elections later this year, said.

The army, in a rare statement, said it had gaioed the upper hand over the militants.

"Everywhere they are holed up — in mountains, villages or in towns — terrorist groups suffered stiff blows at the hand of the defenders of Algeria's independence and unity," the army added in a commentary carried by APS.

Algerian newspapers reported last mooth that the army had made sweeping attacks on militants and had killed at least 2,800 of them. The government broadly hinted that the reports were true although it never provided details.

JORDAN TIMES DAILY GUIDE AND CALENDAR

JORDAN TELEVISION

Tel: 773111-19

PROGRAMME TWO

14:00 ..... Captain Planet
14:30 ..... I Witness Video
15:30 ..... Road to Avonlea
16:30 ..... Tarazan
17:00 ..... Les Ratous L'Aveurs
17:30 ..... Pyramide
18:00 Tour Du Monde Tour Du Ciel
19:00 ..... News in French
19:15 ..... Faut Pas Rever
19:30 The Bold and the Beautiful
20:00 ..... The Nature of Things
20:30 ..... Desmond's
21:10 ..... Jack and Ripper
22:00 ..... News in English
22:20 ..... Seaforth
00:59 ..... Lonesome Dove

PRAYER TIMES

05:38 ..... Fajr
06:59 ..... *(Sunrise) Duha*
13:35 ..... Dhuhr
17:12 ..... 'Asr
20:10 ..... Maghreb
21:32 ..... 'Isha

CHURCHES

St. Mary of Nazareth Church Swelleh, Tel. 810740
Assemblies of God Church, Tel. 632785.
St. Joseph Church Tel. 624590.
Church of the Annunciation Tel. 637440.
De la Salle Church Tel. 661757
Terrasancta Church Tel: 622366
Church of the Annunciation Tel. 623541.
Anglican Church Tel. 630851, Tel. 628543.
Armenian Catholic Church Tel. 771331.
Armenian Orthodox Church Tel. 775261.
St. Ephraim Church Tel. 771751.
Amman International Church Tel. 652526.
Evangelical Lutheran Church Tel: 824328.
German-speaking Evangelical Congregation Tel. 684195
The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-Day Saints Tel. 654932
Church of Nazarene Tel.675691.
The Evangelical Local Church in Amman Tel. 811295.

WEATHER

Bulletin supplied by the Department of Meteorology.

Temperatures are expected to drop and humidity to rise under the effect of a depression that will affect the Kingdom. Clouds will build up at different altitudes with a chance of showers in the northern and central parts of the Kingdom, and winds becoming westerly active. In Aqaba, skies will be partly cloudy, winds southerly moderate and seas rough.

Min./Max. temp.

Amman	15/22
Aqaba	18 / 31
Deserts	12/ 25
Jordan Valley	16 / 28

Yesterday's high temperatures: Amman 26, Aqaba 36. Humidity readings: Amman 24 per cent. Aqaba 20 per cent.

USEFUL TELEPHONE NUMBERS

NIGHT DUTY

AMMAN:

Dr. Mukhles Mazahra	820425
Dr. Jamal Jbarah	847351
Dr. Abdul Wahab Awad	846070
Dr. Ahmad Othman	786348
Firas pharmacy	661912
Ferdows pharmacy	778336
Al Asema pharmacy	637055
Nairoukh pharmacy	623672
Al Salam pharmacy	636730
Yacoub pharmacy	644945
Shmeisani pharmacy	637660
Nairouih pharmacy	623672
Najib pharmacy	847832

IRBID:

Dr. Akram Momani	248795
Alquds pharmacy	(—)

ZARQA:

Dr. Issa Al Omari	901266
Khalifeh pharmacy	985417

EMERGENCIES

Food Control Centre	637111
Civil Defence Department	661111
Civil Defence Immediate Rescue	630341
Civil Defence Emergency	199
Rescue Police	192, 621111, 637777
Fire Brigade	617101
Blood Bank	775121
Highway Police	843402
Traffic Police	896390
Public Security Department	630321
Hotel Complaints	605800
Price Complaints	661176
Water and Sewerage Complaints	897467
Amman Municipality Complaints	787111
Telephone Information (directory assistance)	121
Overseas Calls	010230
Central Amman Telephone Repairs	623101
Abdali Telephone Repairs	661101
Jordan Television	773111
Radio Jordan	774111
Water Authority	680100
Jordan Electricity Authority	815615
Electric Power Company	636381
RJ Flight Information	08-53200
Queen Alia Intl. Airport	08-53200

HOSPITALS

AMMAN:

Hussein Medical Centre	813813/32
Khalidi Maternity, J. Amn	644281/6
Akileh Maternity, J. Amn.	642441/2
Jabal Amman Maternity	642362
Malhas, J. Amman	636140
Palestine, Shmeisani	664171/4
Shmeisani Hospital	669131
University Hospital	845845
Al-Muasher Hospital	667227/9
The Islamic, Abdali	666127/37
Al-Ahli, Abdali	664164/6
Italian, Al-Muhajreen	777101/3
Al-Bashir, J. Ashrafieh	775111/26
Army, Marka	891611/15
Queen Alia Hospital	686100
Amal Hospital	674155
The Arab Centre for Heart and Special Surgery	865199

ZARQA:

Zarqa Govt. Hospital	(09)983323
Zarqa National Hospital	(09)900560
Ibn Sina Hospital	(09)986732
Al Hikma Modern Hospital	(09)990990

IRBID:

Princess Basma Hospital	(02)275555
Greek Catholic Hospital	(02)272275
Ibn Al Nafees Hospital	(02)247100

AQABA:

Princess Haya Hospital	(03)314111

FOR THE TRAVELLER

QUEEN ALIA INTERNATIONAL AIRPORT

This information is supplied by Royal Jordanian (RJ) information department at the Queen Alia International Airport Tel. (08)53200-5, where it should always be verified.

ARRIVALS

Royal Jordanian (RJ) Flights (Terminal 1)

05:00 Jakarta, Kuala Lumpur (RJ)
08:30 ..... Damascus (RJ)
10:15 ..... Aqaba (RJ)
10:55 ..... Abu Dhabi (RJ)
10:55 ..... Muscat, Dubai (RJ)
11:25 ..... Doha, Bahrain (RJ)
11:30 ..... Madrid (add) (RJ)
17:35 ..... London (RJ)
17:45 ..... Frankfurt (RJ)
18:30 ... Chicago, Amsterdam (RJ)
22:30 ..... Cairo (RJ)
22:45 ..... Vienna (add) (RJ)
03:45 ..... Vienna (RJ)

Other Flights (Terminal 2)

05:20 ..... Vienna (OS)
14:20 ..... Rome (AZ)
21:00 ..... Aden (DY)
21:20 ..... Beirut (ME)
23:20 ..... Amsterdam (KL)
00:55 ..... Bucharest (RO)

DEPARTURES

Royal Jordanian (RJ) Flights (Terminal 1)

05:30 Aqaba, Frankfurt (add) (RJ)
08:00 ..... Aqaba (RJ)
09:15 Amsterdam, New York (RJ)
12:00 ..... Montreal, Toronto (RJ)
12:05 ..... Vienna, Brussels (RJ)
12:30 ..... Aqaba, Paris (RJ)
12:45 ... Aqaba, Vienna (add) (RJ)
12:35 ..... Geneva, Madrid (RJ)
13:20 ..... Frankfurt (RJ)
13:40 ..... London (RJ)
19:15 ..... Cairo (RJ)
19:30 ..... Vienna (add) (RJ)
21:30 ..... Jeddah (RJ)
23:10 Kuala Lumpur, Singapore (RJ)
23:59 ..... Larnaca (RJ)
23:59 ..... Abu Dhabi, Dubai (RJ)
02:00 ..... Jeddah (add) (RJ)

Other Flights (Terminal 2)

06:30 ..... Damascus, Paris (AF)
13:40 ..... Vienna (OS)
15:20 ..... Damascus (AZ)
22:00 ..... Aden (DY)
00:35 ..... Amsterdam (KL)
01:55 ..... Bucharest (RO)

HIJAZ RAILWAY TRAIN

Dep. Amman 8:00 every Monday
Arr. Damascus 5:00 p.m. every Monday
Dep. Damascus 7:30 a.m. every Sunday
Arr. Amman 5:00 p.m. every Sunday

MARKET PRICES

Upper/lower price in fils per kg.

Apple	650/ 450
Banana	680
Banana (Mukammar)	620
Cabbage	130 / 70
Carrot	180/100
Cauliflower	180/ 120
Cucumbers (large)	90 / 60
Cucumbers (small)	150 / 90
Eggplant	250/ 150
Garlic	400/270
Grape Leaves	1000 / 800
Green beans	240 / 140
Lemon	650 / 500
Marrow (large)	80 / 60
Marrow (small)	160 / 100
Mulukhia	320 / 250
Onion (dry)	160/ 100
Orange	560/400
Peas	480/ 350
Pepper (hot)	500 / 300
Pepper (sweet)	400 / 250
Potato	280/ 200
String Beans	280 / 180
Tomato	150/80

Her Royal Highness Princess Basma chats with children at the Nazzal Community Centre (Petra photo)

Princess Basma stresses development at seminar on homemakers' needs

AMMAN (Petra) — Her Royal Highness Princess Basma Monday opened a seminar on the problems and needs of housewives at the community centre in Nazzal district by underlining the role of Jordanian women in social development.

Community centres offer women the chance to take part in various training and in programmes designed to promote social development in the country, said the Princess in a brief address at the meeting.

Success of development work cannot be achieved by mere studies, but rather through practical work in the field where all citizens have a chance to participate in serving their country, said Princess Basma.

Referring to the social changes in the last few years, the Princess noted that women were more affected by these forces than any other segments of society.

Sociologist Sari Nasser, president of the Community Centres Society, outlined the objectives of the group noting that they are based on the concept of voluntary work for the development of local communities.

After the speeches, Princess Basma opened an exhibition displaying products such as flowers, garments and embroideries made by the community centre members.

The two-day seminar is scheduled to discuss social issues and housewive's needs, as well as the role of women in developing local communities.

Bahrain, Jordan upgrade trade protocol

MANAMA (Petra) — Jordan and Bahrain have agreed to exempt their exchanged agricultural and industrial products from import fees and all other customs duty.

The agreement was contained in a new protocol signed Monday in Manama by Minister of Industry and Trade Ali Abul Ragheb and Bahraini Minister of Trade and Agriculture Habib Qassem following talks over the last two days.

The new protocol, which updates one signed in 1975, urges the two sides to exert efforts to facilitate the flow of agricultural and industrial products between them and remove all related administrative and financial barriers.

Under the protocol, also, the two countries pledge to cooperate in the fields of land transport, tourism and financial markets.

They agreed to convene a meeting of the directors of the financial markets in the two countries to decide on measures related to listing Bahraini companies' operations in the Amman Financial Market (AFM) statements, and those of Jordan in the Bahraini financial market listing.

The protocol expressed Jordan's readiness to meet Bahrain's requirements of engineers, physicians and teachers, and voiced the Kingdom's keenness to promote bilateral relations and economic cooperation.

Mr. Abul Ragheb extended an invitation to Bahrain to participate in the Amman Economic Summit due to be held in Amman in October.

The Bahraini officials accepted the invitation and promised their country's active participation at the public and private levels.

After the signing of the protocol, Mr. Abul Ragheb inaugurated the Jordanian Industrial Fair which is displaying samples of products by 45 Jordanian firms.

Earth Week off to slow start

RSCN chief calls for environmental action

By Cathy King
Jordan Times Staff Reporter

AMMAN — Earth Week held at the American Embassy Monday began slowly: visitors to the companies' exhibition and attendants at the presentations, were few in number.

"It has been slow today, but it should pick up during the week," said an embassy official. "The best day is expected to be the last day (Thursday) when school children will be presenting projects on the environment. We expect there to be as many as 5,000 visitors," she said.

Royal Society for the Conservation of Nature (RSCN) President Anis Muasher launched the symposium with a keynote address. His speech emphasised the need for immediate action and an end to conferences and seminars that have resulted in nothing.

"There is a problem of implementation. If we are to show we are serious about building up Jordan, we must start implementing the theoretics" which have been regularly debated over the last three years, Mr. Muasher said.

He orged that the National Strategy for the Conservation of Nature, which was drawn up in 1990, be put into implementation given that the new era of peace will herald "more tourists, more industry and more production, (resulting in) more consumption. And unless we know what we're doing and unless we create sustainable development, we could destroy our beautiful Jordan."

In his speech Mr. Muasher traced the history of the Kingdom's environmental effort which began over 30 years ago when His Majesty King Hussein invited a group of environmentalists to Jordan.

But in the recent past, Mr. Muasher said that the numerous conferences and seminars had not prevented the Talal Dam from becoming polluted, the Amman, Dhleil and Jaffa basins from becoming saline and the virtual salinity of Azraq basin.

Urbanisation has destroyed 25 per cent of agricultural land, he said. "Had there been some forethought and planning, and we had moved 25 kilometres to the east we would have saved it," Mr. Muasher stated.

In addition and on the topic of bio-diversity, he said that grazing land which formerly constituted the "green cover," or the vegetation area between the desert and agricultural land, had been destroyed.

"This belt forms 12 per cent of Jordan. It was grazing land, but it has been destroyed through ploughing." Ploughing has been carried out to prove ownership, he said, adding that the only part of this area that has been preserved is now within the nature reserves.

On a more positive track, Mr. Muasher noted with enthusiasm the recent introduction of unleaded gasoline, but hoped that all "oil for cars" would soon be using it.

Meanwhile, Friends of Environment member and economics specialist Rasim Abdul Rahim believed the inclusion of an exhibition of companies' products during Earth Week, was to instil greater awareness of the importance of the environment to the business community.

Protection of the environment, Mr. Rahim asserted, is beneficial to the economy.

Western technology, he said, is available to the Kingdom and could be developed and moulded to suit the country's needs. Mr. Rahim suggested that there should be concentration upon technology used in waste management, water resources management and recycling.

If Western technology is imported and to its specifications' features are added to produce technology more compatible with local society, Mr. Rahim affirmed, that the level of industrial technology would be raised, production levels would be increased and national output boosted, all leading to an increase in disposable income.

"This then gives a real value to GDP (Gross Domestic Product) and GNP (Gross National Product)," he said.

But he criticised the private sector for not taking the initiative, for failing to be creative or innovative. The private sector, he said, has become dependent on external assistance and policy makers. This, he said, was proved by the low attendance of private sector representatives on the first day of Earth Week.

"Only 30 people came to view the exhibition. There may be something to learn here," Mr. Rahim said, describing the private sector as lacking innovative "investment."

Earth Week, held at the American Embassy, will continue today (Tuesday) between 9 a.m. and 5 p.m. and on Wednesday and Thursday from 9 a.m. to 4 p.m.

The subject heading of today's presentations is biodiversity and pollution problems, while Wednesday will focus on waste problems and recycling and Thursday has been dedicated to environmental projects undertaken by the Kingdom's youth.

WHAT'S GOING ON

EARTH WEEK

☆ Earth Week activities (consisting of an exhibition of catalogues by major environment-oriented companies, student and school presentations, business seminars for professionals, electronic dialogues between experts in the U.S. and their Jordanian counterparts, public awareness demonstrations and more) at the American Center.

FILM

☆ Iranian film entitled "Bashu" at Abdul Hameed Shoman Foundation at 7:30 p.m.

PSD breaks 5 murder cases — official

By Rana Husseini
Special to the Jordan Times

AMMAN — The Public Security Department (PSD) Monday announced that since January Amman police have arrested several suspects in connection with separate murders and two additional crimes.

Amman Police Chief Brigadier General Adel Armouti told a press conference held at PSD headquarters in Abdali that since the beginning of the year police have solved five murder cases and arrested suspects in armed robbery and forgery cases.

Brig. Gen. Armouti said police apprehended several suspects in connection with the double murder of a 28-year-old woman and her six-month-old child who were found stabbed to death in the Sbmeisani area on March 18.

"We are gathering evidence (in the double murder case), and when we feel that all our procedures are completed we will announce the result of our investigations," he said.

In another murder case, he said, three people suspected of shooting and killing a 24-year-old student in Yajouz area were arrested.

According to the police official, the three suspects, pretending to be secret police, lured the couple away, demanded money from the victim, Mohammad Ghanem, then shot him in the head.

In the third case, Brig.-Gen. Armouti said, on April 12, a body of an Egyptian national was found dumped in a farm area in Sahab. According to the official, the body of Mazen Mohammad had several stab wounds.

"Our investigations led us to suspect, also an Egyptian national, who later confessed to killing Mr. Mohammad to avenge an old incident."

Brig. Gen. Armouti said that another incident which was solved recently involved a 62-year-old woman who was found stabbed to death in her apartment in Jabal Nasser.

"Preliminary investigations indicated that the fiancé of the victim's daughter was the primary suspect, and after questioning him he confessed," Brig.-Gen. Armouti said adding that theft was the motive behind the crime.

The official added that the remaining two murders were crimes of honour. One occurred in Naour, and another in Marka, he said. The official, however would not reveal details of either of the case.

Brig.-Gen. Armouti said that two people were arrested and charged with armed robbery of a jewellery shop in Jabal Nazal.

He said the shop owner was in his store when the two suspects entered and demanded to see a set of jewellery.

One of the suspects struck the owner with an object, said the official.

"The shopowner resisted the men and they fled the scene," he said, adding that the shop owner had drawn his gun and gone after the intruders.

"He shot twice at them, but unfortunately a seven-year-old child who was standing nearby was hit with a stray bullet. The child survived," he said.

The police chief also reported that three people were apprehended and charged with the theft of official documents from the Department of Passports and Civil Registration in Sweileh.

According to the police chief, the suspects hid in the department and waited until working hours were over, then stole 10 passports, 10 family books, and 150 identity cards.

He said that the suspects used one identification card to cash a JD 3,500 cheque.

However, the men were caught in the second attempt when they were trying to cash a JD 7,500.

Police retrieved all the stolen documents.

The police official also reviewed the situation of crime in Jordan since January saying that "crime happens in every society, and our society is safe taking into consideration the rapid changes that are affecting our region."

Since the beginning of the year and until April 16, there were 5,977 crimes in the Kingdom.

"We conducted a study which revealed that sharp objects such as knives and switchblades were used in most crimes," Brig. Gen. Armouti said.

Therefore, he added, starting April 1, the PSD will monitor people with previous criminal records to see if they are carrying sharp objects.

"The law is on our side, and there are articles in the law that stipulate that we can seize such objects and apprehend anyone who carries them and present them to court," he said.

The police chief called on the press to take a more responsible role when covering murder cases.

"Recently some newspapers published inaccurate information on some murders, and in some incidents it distracted our investigation course," Brig. Gen. Armouti said, stressing that the authorities respect the freedom of the press and its right to publish anything it wants as long as it does not interfere with the investigation procedures.

"We hope that the media will take into consideration the circumstances of every case especially if the information that is published could serve the suspects," he said.

He further added that citizens also play a major role in crime prevention.

Arab contractors open 3-day meeting

Government seeks to update contracting laws

AMMAN (Petra) — The government is re-examining laws and regulations applicable to the contracting industry with a view to bringing them in line with modern requirements and international developments, Minister of Public Works and Housing Abdul Razzaq Ensour said.

Opening a three-day conference organised by the Arab Contractors Union in cooperation with the Jordanian Contractors Association (JCA), the minister said that the contracting sector in Jordan has contributed significantly towards promoting the national economy over recent years.

In 1994 alone, this sector invested JD 117 million in construction and infrastructure projects benefiting other sectors in the country, said the minister.

Highlighting the government's continued cooperation with the JCA, Dr. Ensour noted that the contracting sector is currently employing nearly 20 per cent of the Jordanian workforce and contributing by at least 10 per cent to the Kingdom's gross domestic product.

If the last four years witnessed a boom in activities of the construction and contracting sector, the years ahead are expected to open up greater opportunities in view of the expanding Jordanian economy and the greater role given to the private sector, the minister said.

Minister of Public Works and Housing Abdul Razzaq Ensour (second left) opens the Arab Contractors Union conference in Amman. To Dr. Ensour's right is Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Information Khaled Karaki who deputised for His Royal Highness Crown Prince Hassan (Petra photo)

Jordan negotiates with international firms on use of shale oil to produce electricity

By P.V. Vivekanand
Jordan Times Staff Reporter

AMMAN — Jordan is negotiating with international companies on the use of shale oil to produce electricity and shale ashes in the construction industry, according to Minister of Energy and Mineral Resources Samih Darwazeh.

The move to "burn" shale rock to generate power came after Jordan found that extracting shale oil was economically infeasible in view of the low international price of oil.

Jordan is estimated to have at least 40 billion tonnes of shale rocks with an average 10 per cent content of oil by weight. But it costs about $22 to $25 per barrel of oil, much higher than the international price of crude oil, the minister said in an interview with the Jordan Times.

Several countries, including China and some of the former Soviet republics, conducted research and studies on Jordanian shale in the late 80s. At that time it was found that it could cost around $18 to produce a barrel of shale oil while the crude prices in the international market were dramatically declining.

In addition, oil shale extraction also needs a very high level of investment.

Subsequently, the government commissioned a study on the technical and economic feasibility of the direct combustion of shale oil for power generation.

The finding of the study was largely in favour of Jordan using its shale wealth to produce energy, and it recommended that a pilot project be set up.

Mr. Darwazeh said: "At this stage we are negotiating with certain American, Swedish and Australian companies" on direct combustion of oil shale.

The general focus of the discussions is the 'buy, own and transfer" mechanism under which the contracted company will invest its own funds and operate the facilities and will transfer the equipment to Jordanian ownership after the contract period. Further details of the negotiations were not immediately available.

"Once we find that it is economically feasible ... after comparing the cost with our present costs of production ... we will use oil shale to generate electricity," the minister said. "Of course we have to bear in mind that oil shale is our natural resource while we are importing oil from abroad."

An additional advantage of direct combustion of oil shale is that the shale ashes could be used in the construction industry, he noted.

"Some technologies show that these ashes could be used for building roads, making bricks etc." he said. "We are studying all possibilities."

Mr. Darwazeh said any increase in the use of Al Risheh gas to generate electricity would come only after a newly-set up government-owned commercial firm conducts thorough studies.

At present, the Risheh gas well produces 30 to 35 million cubic feet to run gas turbines. The power produced at the Risheh facilities represents about 18 per cent of Jordan's annual needs.

The deposits at Risheh, estimated at 215 billion cubic feet, are enough to maintain the present output for the next 10 years, said Mr. Darwazeh.

Gas has been discovered at another site, about 50 kilometres from Al Risheh, but the deposits there have not been definitely established.

"We have good signs that we have gas" in the area, Mr. Darwazeh said. "We have to decide now whether to use it immediately or keep it as reserve. Again, it is an economic decision."

Students plan unity rally, but university officials say 'timing is inappropriate'

By Rana Husseini
Special to the Jordan Times

AMMAN — The Student Union at the University of Jordan Monday said it will pursue its quest to organise a rally to call for national unity among students next Wednesday following ethnic clashes on campus over a week ago, despite the university administration's rejection to allow the rally.

The April 5 clashes between students of Salti and Circassian origin left 20 students injured and was followed by a smaller brawl in which three people were injured. Community leaders' interference to solve the problem failed.

During a press conference Monday at the university, Student Union members condemned the "regrettable events" that occurred on their campus and said that they have a "quick plan of action to try to solve the conflict."

"One of the main aims of our newly elected student body was to form a programme to solve the problem that occurred between small groups of students at the university," a Student Union statement said.

The statement charged that the events could have been minimised if people from outside the university had not interfered, referring to the attempts by community leaders to bring the situation to an end.

"The Student Union felt that the clashes were limited and that the conflict could have been solved within the university premises, but parties from outside the university interfered in the case," the statement said.

This, the statement maintained, hindered the Student Union's efforts to end the conflict peacefully and at the same time it instigated both parties involved and augmented the incident which "reflected negatively on our national unity."

The Student Union also faulted the university administration in mishandling the situation accusing it of practising oppression instead of focusing on more important issues.

The Student Union statement said that the administration rejected their bid to conduct a rally because outside pressure on the university prevented it from approving such a gathering.

A university official, however, told the Jordan Times Monday that the reason the university administration rejected the rally was that "it is not the right time for it."

"The atmosphere is still tense, and such a gathering might spark an incident. We do not want to take any chances," the official said.

According to the official, more than 30 students have been questioned so far, and dozens more are expected to be questioned in connection with the brawls. It might take some time before the investigations are completed, the official added.

Writers tire of debate on normalisation

By Sa'eda Kilani
Special to the Jordan Times

AMMAN — Some Jordanian writers called for ending the current debate over normalisation because they see the conflict as negatively affecting the cultural atmosphere of the country.

In a seminar held at the Jordanian Arab Democratic Party headquarters on Sunday evening, prominent writers expressed their disappointment over what they termed as the futile debate over normalisation that is being waged at all levels and in all organisations and movements, and contended that normalisation can be mainly fought by liberating the Arab mind.

Prominent writer Mu'nis Razzaz, former president of the Jordanian Writers Association (JWA), said some writers, who are holding the banners of anti-normalisation, have wasted the time and efforts of the JWA's former administrative committee engaging in recurrent squabblings.

Instead, Mr. Razzaz said, writers and the public as well should have concentrated on tackling the main social and political problems that dominate the Arab societies.

According to Mr. Razzaz, a columnist at Al Dustour Arabic daily, normalisation can only be combatted through the liberation of the Arab mentality and through encouraging intellectuals and writers to be more productive and creative.

"For 500 years, the Arab mind has been living in the darkness," he said. "Ibda' (creativity) has been linked with bida'a (false religious beliefs) in the past, and the instigators of hida'a were considered blasphemous and deserving of death penalty."

"The issue now is not how do we combat normalisation, it is how do we combat the pastural and agricultural mentality," he added. "If we just try to rid ourselves of the cold war mentality that dominates our lives, our political parties and our movements... we will be able to combat normalisation."

Mr. Razzaz did not give a definition of the word normalisation. Instead he relayed that task to women's activist Huda Fakhouri who defined normalisation as having any direct contact with the Israeli zionist institutions.

Mr. Razzaz explained: "We have had three very long conferences at the association to discuss what do we mean by normalisation, and every time we reach a dead end and we start again from zero. I'm sick of the word normalisation. I see it everywhere, at night and in my daydreams."

One of the participants at the two-hour meeting asked whether writers have a good knowledge of Israeli literature, culture or politics.

Writer Hashem Gharaibeh said, no.

"We have not made an effort to know anything about our enemy, while they (Israelis) have conducted thousands of studies on us and know the smallest details," Mr. Gharaibeh said.

Another participant asked whether normalisation of relations should be combatted with all Israelis or some of them or only with politicians.

"Who is the target? Is it the Jew himself/herself? Is it the politicians or the zionist movement? If the Jordanian regime occupied another land, does that mean that all Jordanians approve this policy?" the participant asked.

There have been no clear-cut answers to all these questions.

Filipino foreign secretary resigns in maid case

MANILA (AP) — In a move to mollify his critics, President Fidel Ramos Monday announced he has accepted the resignation of Foreign Secretary Roberto Romulo, who has been under fire in the wake of the hanging of a Filipino maid in Singapore last month.

Mr. Ramos said in a nationally televised press conference that he accepted Mr. Romulo's resignation "with deep regret" and appointed the Pbilippine Ambassador to Japan, Domingo Siazon, as Mr. Romulo's successor. Mr. Romulo will remain in office until April 30 and Mr. Siazon will take over on May 1, Mr. Ramos said.

Mr. Ramos, however, still has not decided on whether to accept the resignation of Lahour Secretary Nieves Confesor, who has also come under pressure to resign over the hanging of Filipina maid Flor Contemplacion.

Mrs. Contemplacion was banged on March 17 for the 1991 killing of fellow Filipina maid Delia Maga and her 4-year-old Singaporean ward, Nicholas Huang. Many Filipinos believe sbe was framed.

Ms. Confesor is chairwoman of tbe governing board of the International Labour Organisation (ILO). Mario Galman, a spokesman of tbe ILO office in Manila, said removing Ms. Confesor "will not look good internationally."

Ms. Confesor has said she has a "standing" offer to resign since joining the Ramos cahinet in June 1992.

"I just keep working and see if mine is the next head to roll," she said. "I guess the issue here is oot competence nor effectivity. Do you really have to sack a person just to appease?"

Mr. Ramos has been under pressure to remove both Mr. Romulo and Ms. Confesor. His political oppooents have used the Maga-Contemplacion case as an election issue against administration candidates in the May 8 election.

The administration is sensitive to criticisms abont the 3 million Filipinos working overseas from relatives at home. Filipino overseas workers contrihute about $1 hillion to the economy yearly in remittances.

Sen. Blas Ople, chairman of the Senate Committee on Foreign Relations, supported Mr. Ramos' move, saying it was a "signal" that foreign policy should now begin serving the millions of Filipinos working abroad.

"I hope that in the future it will not be necessary for the president to carry out a pogrom of the cabinet everytime a mishap occurs to placate public anger over the way Filipinos abroad are mistreated by host countries," Mr. Ople said.

The two officials have been criticised for not giving enough support to Mrs. Contemplacion.

Thousands demonstrated at the Singapore embassy to protest the hanging despite appeals to stay the execution to present purported "new evidence" to prove ber innocence.

A presidential commission that investigated the Maga-Contemplacion case said in a report submitted to Mr. Ramos two weeks ago that Mr. Romulo and Ms. Confesor have become ineffective in their posts and recommended firing about a dozen other officials.

Last week, Mr. Ramos fired the former ambassador to Singapore, suspended the current eovoy and seven other labour and foreign affairs officials for negligence and incompetence.

He also ordered state prosecutors to consider criminal charges against them and two other former heads of the Overseas Workers Welfare Administration.

Mr. Ramos made no reference to the Contemplacion case in accepting the Romulo's resignation, whicb was made two weeks ago.

He commended Mr. Romulo for his expertise, managerial skills, integrity and professionalism in directing the government's diplomatic thrust of strengthen economic ties with other countries.

In a breaking voice, Mr. Romulo later told reporters that the uproar over the banging of Mrs. Contemplacion has derailed the focus of the nation in developing the economy. He also said the government has come under unfair criticism by political opponents of Mr. Ramos.

"It is my desire now that the country will be able to see the situation from a cooler and more objective perspective," Mr. Romulo said. "I bope that the partisan politics surrounding the Maga-Contemplacion case will subside."

"In my beart of bearts, the Maga-Contemplacioo case; tragic though it may be and serious though it is, I felt that it detracted from the overall ambition and the actual performance of this administration. So I felt that if we can put this to rest with my resignation, so let it be."

Relations between the Philippines and Singapore has been severely strained since the hanging, but both Mr. Ramos and Prime Minister Goh Chok Tong appeared recently to be trying to patch them up.

The two agreed to send Singaporean forensic experts to examine the remains of Delia Maga, who was said to have been strangled to death.

Filipino medical examiners from the National Bureau of Investigation, however, said Mrs. Maga was severely beaten and was strangulated merely to finish her off.

Fire kills 11 in Taiwan

TAIPEI (AP) Fire swept through a Taipei nightclub before dawn Monday, killing 11 people and injuring 13 in the second major club blaze this year. Police suspected arson.

One man was burned to death at the door of an elevator in the Hymns Of Happiness Karaoke Club, and 10 others who escaped via a stairway died after being hospitalised for smoke inhalation, police said.

Three of the injured were listed in critical coodition, they said.

It was the latest in a series of deadly fires io recent years, and renewed questions about Taiwan's fire safety standards, criticised as lax after 64 people died in February in the island's deadliest blaze.

Police were looking for a man suspected of tossing a firebomb into the lobby of the five-story building, starting the fire, officer Oung Ching-Ho told reporters. The club was on the top three floors. A beanty parlor on the first two floors also was gutted.

State radio quoted bar waitresses as saying a man, thought to be a disgruntled customer, had threatened to set fire to the clnb. It did not elaborate.

The cluh contained 39 customers and employees, mostly young people, and 15 escaped or were rescued unhurt, police said.

"We were singing in a room and suddenly it went all hlack," survivor Lin Mei-Hui told the radio. "The smoke was so thick that we could not find the exit."

Ms. Lin said she and two friends escaped unharmed from the fifth floor hy climbing down an outdoor advertising billboard.

Fire officer Chang Ching-Ruog said the cluh used flammable materials in its partitioos and decorations but otherwise met safety standards.

The cluh was licensed as a food store and had been fined nine times — a total of 168,000 Taiwan dollars ($6,500) — over the past two years for operating a karaoke bar instead, officials said.

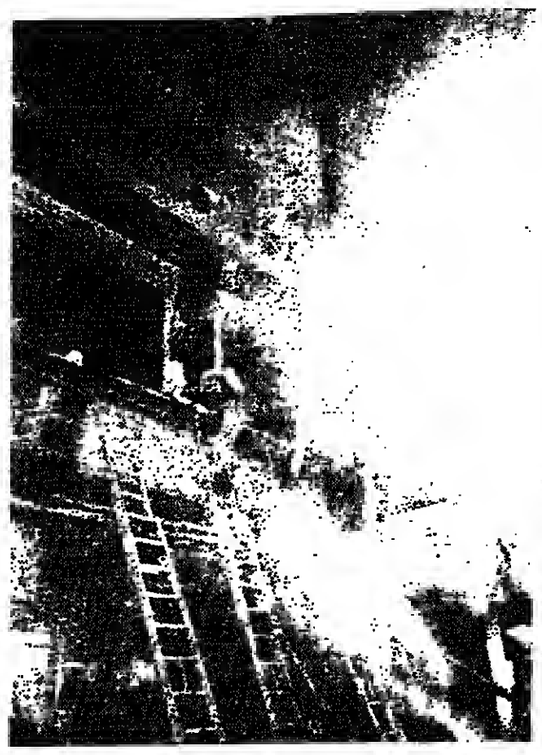
Taipei Mayor Chen Shui-Bian expressed regret for the fire and said that a crackdown agaiost illegal businesses which violate safety or zoning codes would continne, but could take some time.

"There are just too many of them," be said.

City councilors accused Mr. Chen of failing to fulfil promises to improve safety in the capital.

Karaoke clubs offer rooms for hire in which customers sing-along to taped music on TV. The clubs have suffered at least five deadly fires in four years.

Critics say that fire precautions have been neglected in Taiwan's rapid economic growth, whicb has created a thriving but crowded urban nightlife. Officials figures sbow fire deaths rose from 250 in 1991 to 371 last year.



Firefighters climh np to the Kuai Lo Sung Karaoke Club, in an attempt to rescue people from a blaze in downtown Taipie (AFP photo)

Asia's Davids begin defying Chinese Goliath

BEIJING (AFP) — China's oeigbbonrs, wbile deeply worried over its ambitions in the region, are in growing numbers starting to openly defy the Asian giant.

The visit of the Tibetan religious leader, the Dalai Lama, to Japan for the first time in 11 years in early April was among the latest in a list of instances demonstrating a change in the attitude of Asia's Davids towards the Chinese Goliath.

Japan chose to ignore a Chinese warning delivered beforehand.

"We call upon Japan not to allow the Dalai Lama's visit and to prevent a deterioration in bilateral relations," Foreign Ministry spokesman Chen Jian had said oo the eve of the Tibetan leader's visit.

It was oot the first instance of the Japanese taking a dim view of Chinese diktat. In October, they had allowed Taiwanese Vice-Premier Hsu Li-Teh to be preseot at the Hiroshima Asian Games, ignoring repeated Chinese protests.

But hy granting a visa to the Dalai Lama, the 1989 Nobel Peace laureate, Japan seemed to be confirming its determinatioo to stand up to China, thereby exposing the limits of Beijing's diplomatic strategy hased on threats, according to analysts bere.

"The Japanese calculations clearly paid off, because Qiao Shi (chairman of the Natiooal People's Coogress) weot ahead with his visit to Japan on the heels of the Dalai Lama, and the Japanese Prime Minister, Tomiicbi Morayama, will come to China in May," an Asian diplomat said.

The Philippines, for its part, appeared to be holding out against China over the vexed issue of the Spratly Islands io the South China Sea, claimed wholly or partly by the two countries as well as Brunei, Malaysia, Taiwan and Vietnam.

Manila, which had kept a low profile on what has emerged as the burning qoestion in the South East Asian region, recently sent its naval vessels to destroy some structures built by the Chinese on several disputed atolls.

Instead of making loud protests as was its wont until recently, Beijing this time curiously contented itself with a public denunciation of wbat it called Manila's "futile actions."

"None wants to, or can, challenge Beijing in the region but an increasing number of countries are realising that it is dangerous for them and for regional stability if they were to keep kowtowing to the Cbinese dragon," the Asian diplomat said.

"It seems tbe Asian countries are taking at its word the Chinese government's assertion that 'the world needs China and China needs the world'," a Western diplomat said.

China is at present concentrating oo comprehensive modernisation and therefore needs to moltiply its trade and economic contacts with is neighhours, the diplomat added.

Other observers say the regional rebellion stems from the uncertainties besettiog the Communist regime which is anxiously awaiting the passing of the 90-year-old patriarch Deng Xiaoping, who has oot be seen in public for 14 months.

The Chinese leadership, with state president and party chief Jiang Zemin as its head, bas been weakened by internecine struggles and Asian countries are taking advantage of it to advance their own agenda, observers say.

Even Indooesia, which had stayed out of the Spratlys dispute, has got in on the act. It has kindled a boundary dispute with China over the Natuna Islands close to the Spratyls.

For its part, Taiwan, the island administered by the Nationalists which China claims as its own province, has kept up its aggressive quest for diplomatic contacts.

Taiwanese Presideot Lee Teng-Hui who had made a high-profile "private" visit to several South East Asian countries in early 1994, recently went to the United Arah Emirates and Jordan.

Moch to Beijing's chagrin, he has few more "vacation" plans up his sleeve, including a possible one to the United States, although Washington bas until now resisted Mr. Lee's overtures for fear of offending the Chinese.

French Channel ferry starts to sink after passengers, crew evacuate

SAINT HELIER, Jersey (AFP) — A French ferry which ran into difficulties as it was carrying 307 passengers to Jersey in the Channel Islands began sinking Monday after the vessel was evacuated.

Five crew memebrs who had remained aboard to take part in a towing operation have now left the ship, the Saint Malo, port authorities in Jersey's capital, Saint Helier, said.

About 16 of the passengers were slightly injured during a large-scale rescue operation after the sbip sprang a leak in rough seas off the self-governing Channel Islands, whicb are Britisb crown property.

The injured, who suffered fractures, were being taken to hospital, the St. Helier Coast Guards added. Other passengers were being treated for shock.

Those needing treatment were evacuated by helicopters and a British Royal Navy ship.

Dole: Foster nomination 'in extremis'

WASHINGTON (AP) — Two leading U.S. presidential candidates on Sunday said passage of a constitutional amendment to ban abortion was unlikely, but both suggested they would use their power if elected to limit access to the controversial procedure.

"We all know that the there is not a consensus in the party or in the country to reform the constitution," said Sen. Phil Gramm on CBS's Face The Nation. "But that doesn't mean there aren't things we can do."

His opponent for the Republican nomination in the 1996 race, Senate majority leader Bob Dole, reflected similar views on NBC's Meet The Press.

Sen.. Dole, whose comments appeared aimed at conservatives wbo are angered by what they see as America's moral decline, said Dr. Henry Foster's bid to be surgeon general is all but dead.

Seo. Dole said it may not even get out of committee. "If it does, I'm not certain that I'll call it up," he said. "I'd say the nomination is 'in extremis.' It's not very viable right now."

Hearings are slated to begin on May 2 before the Senate Labour and Human Resources Committee. Only Dr. Foster and members of Congress will be called to testify.

Dr. Foster bas run into opposition on Capitol Hill for understating the number of abortions he has performed.

Meanwhile, Mr. Gramm, reiterated his pledge to end affirmative action and balance the federal budget by the end of his first term if elected president.

He refused to support the Clinton administration's review of affirmative actioo, saying "the facts are in," and vowing to end "quotas and set-asides.

India's Congress leaders in disarray

NEW DELHI (R) — The leadership of India's ruling Congress is locked in a curious game of shadow boxing as the party begins to shape up for general elections due within 14 months.

As the main opposition party, the Hindu nationalist Bharatiya Jaoata Party (BJP), prepares for a top level electoral strategy meeting next week, Congress appears in total disarray, its leaders anxiously jockeying for position against almost any eventuality.

While dissidents discuss wbether to set up a rival party, other leaders are taken up with private hattles and still more are struggling to sit on an ever more shakey political fence.

Much of the party's current discomfort arises from the decision of a dissident former junior minister to lodge several amendments, or "cut" motions, to the government budget, due to be debated in parliament later this month.

Rangarajan Kumaramangalam said the changes he was seeking, including increased food subsidies for the poor and cheaper electricity for farmers, reflected agreed policies of the ruling party.

Underlining growing divisions in the party, dissidents said as many as 34 Cougress members of parliament might support the amendments, which would cut to the heart of the government's economic policies.

Suggestions the main opposition parties might join the dissideots, threatening Congress' fragile majority, have triggered another round of soul searching. Congress says it controls a six- or seven-seat majority in the 545-memher lower house where allegiances can shift with political winds.

Prime Minister P.V. Narasimha Rao, who appears increasingly unable to quell the squahhling in his ruling party ranks, waded into the argument, threatening to call a snap poll if his opponents united against him.

While the BJP said Mr. Rao should go ahead and call an early election, which might work to the opposition party's advantage following successes in recent provincial polls, otbers were not so keen.

Congress members of parliament fretted that the party was ill prepared for an early vote, and even the dissidents appeared to row hack from militancy.

"The cut motions prohahly won't come up in the house," the Business Standard quoted a dissident source as saying. "But our purpose is served as tbe issues have found the media attention we desired."

The leader of the Congress dissidents, expelled former cabinet minister Arjun Singh, was meanwhile going ahead with plans to form a new party in May, drawing support from bis power hase in the central Indian state of Madbya Pradesh.

But bis main potential ally, former Finance and Foreign Minister N.D. Tiwari, who commands widespread Congress support in India's largest state Uttar Paradesh, continued to withhold full support from Mr. Singb.

And for the two top Congress leaders in India's most industrialised state, Maharashtra, a former party stronghold lost in local assembly elections last month, personal differeoces appeared to dominate the agenda.

With Sharad Pawar out of the state house in Bombay, his arch foe Sudhakarrao Naik was back in town, meeting opposition leaders and organising a campaign to recapture the leadership of the state Congress Party from Mr. Pawar.

U.S. admission on Vietnam causes Australian rift

SYDNEY (Agencies) — Australia's top-rank Conservatives have split over the nation's role in the Vietnam War, with one war-time premier calling it wrong and another defending the decision to send in troops 30 years ago.

In a renewed debate sparked by a former U.S. defence secretary's admission that "we were wrong", former Prime Minister Sir John Gorton said it was now clear that neither the United States nor Australia should have entered the war.

"Now I don't think the war was justified," Sir John said in remarks published in the Australian newspaper Monday.

Sir John led Australia from 1968 to 1971, when Australian troops fought with U.S. forces against North Vietnam's Communist army for the same avowed reason, to stop the spread of communism.

But in a column printed in the same newspaper, ex-Prime Minister Malcolm Fraser, Sir John's defence minister, defended the reasons for sending in troops in 1965.

"I believed the cause was right," Mr. Fraser wrote, accusing U.S. forces of not using more effective tactics in the prolonged conflict, which ended with the fall of Saigon in 1975.

U.S. forces pulled out of Vietnam in 1973. Australia withdraw the year before, after 424 of its troops were killed.

"Presumed solutions were put forward to meet political requirements, not military ones," Mr. Fraser wrote of U.S. tactics. He also rejected former U.S. Defence Secretary Robert McNamara's change of heart on the war.

"We were wrong. Terribly wrong," Mr. McNamara wrote in his memoir published last week. As defence secretary for seven years until 1968, he played such a important role in the Vietnam War that it was once known in the United States as "McNamara's war."

His book has prompted soul-searching within Australia's Liberals, the Conservative Party that ruled the country for decades until 1972.

Now in opposition, the party's foreign-affairs spokesman, Alexander Downer, defended Australia's role in tbe war, saying fears that communism would spread from Vietnam into South East Asia "did have some substance."

"If we hadn't had any involvement in the war, hut more significantly... if the United States hadn't been involved in the Vietnam War and held up the South Vietnam government for as long as it was held up, then it's hard to know what the implications would have been for neighbouring countries," he said in a television interview at the weekend.

Historian Glen Barclay said Monday that Mr. Downer should now admit his Liberal Party predecessors were wrong to pursue "the only really unpopular war Australia has got into."

The evidence showed Australia's interests were not threatened, he said.

"They are not prepared to admit that the whole thing was misbegotten from the start and that there was no evidence justifying intervention in Vietnam," Mr. Barclay of the University of Queensland said.

"I think Conservative politicians now would gain a great deal of credibility if they do say quite frankly that previous Conservative governments made mistakes," he told Reuters.

Meanwhile, Australia's Governor-General Bill Hayden was due in Hanoi Monday at the start of a ceremonial visit that follows on the heels of a trip by a parliamentary group that looked into human rights issues here.

The visit here is the first hy a governor-general — the representative in Australia of the head of state Queen Elizaheth II. Mr. Hayden is being accorded the full honours of a state visit hy his host President Le Duc Anh.

Mr. Hayden is due to hold talks with Mr. Anh and Prime Minister Vo Van Kiet

Last week a parliamentary delegation visited the country for talks on human rights and religious issues, a sensitive problem between tbe two countries.

In a statement released as they left, the delegation delended its visit from charges that it has only heard the official Vietnamese line on human rights and saying that it had been able to hear a wide range of views.

Vietnamese leader Do Muoi is greeted upon arrival at Tokyo International Airport. The Communist Party secretary general will meet with Japanese government officials and business leaders on his five-day official visit to Japan (AFP photo)

Vietnam leader in Japan

TOKYO (AFP) — Vietnamese leader Do Muoi arrived here Mooday for a five-day visit aimed at securing more economic aid and getting Japanese advice on how to ease the difficult transition to a market economy.

The general secretary of the Vietnamese Communist Party, accompanied by Foreign Minister Nguyen Manh Cam, was scheduled to hold talks with Prime Minister Tomiichi Murayama Tuesday and call on Emperor Akihito Wednesday.

The 78-year-old Vietoamese leader had said before arriviog io Tokyo that he would ask Japan to boost its aid programme and make bolder investmeots in Vietnam, which has a market of 72 million people.

"We would like Japan to provide us with better assistance to help us more quickly overcome our difficulties," he said.

Japan is the number-one aid donour to Vietnam, with soft loans and grants totalling 60 billioo yen ($723 million) a year.

Japan is also the leading trade partner of Vietnam, with total trade totalling $2 billion a year.

But Japanese businessmen, wary of the Vietnamese Communist government's capacity to shift rapidly to a market economy, are treading cautiously in the area of investments.

Japan as a result is only the fifth biggest investor in Vietnam, trailing behind Taiwao, Hong Kong, Singapore and South Korea.

U.K. telephone codes change

LONDON (R) — British Telecommuoications (BT) laid on extra telephone operators to handle an expected deluge of inquiries about a nationwide change in dialling codes. All British telephone codes now start with the tiooal "1" while five cities, Bristol, Nottingham, Sheffield, Leeds and Leicester have entirely new codes. For example, the code for Central Londoo becomes 0171, dialled as 44-171 from outside the country. The £100 million ($160 million) change, made in response to a growing demand for telephones and faxes, enables BT to introduce np to 10 billion new numbers into the next century. A team of 60 operators was on duty waiting to deal with calls from customers confused by the change, and callers wbo misdial will automatically be switched to a recorded announcement telling them of the new codes, BT said.

China province batties to save rare birds

SHANGHAI (R) — A Chinese province has launched a battle to save rare birds from poachers in one of the world's most important sanctuaries, the Liberation Daily reported Monday. The oewspaper said the governor of China's eastern Jiangxi province, bome of Poyang Lake, where almost all of the world's last few Siberian cranes spend the winter, had ordered a police crackdown on poachers. Wu Guanzheng took action after the Liberatioo Daily reported that 30,000 birds were being massacred each year on the lake, most by poisoning, the newspaper said. After reading the report in February, Mr. Wu "very quickly issued instructions demanding tough measures to properly solve the problem." Provincial police are investigating several cases involving the purchase and transport of rare birds, it said. The oewspaper had reported there were only four forestry police and 40 park rangers with little equipment to patrol an area of the lake that attracts migratiog cranes, storks and swans. Many of tbe slaughtered birds end up in cooking pots in southern China, the paper said.

Britons seem to be buried under lottery debts

LONDON (R) — Britons may be neglecting their healtb and their pets or even spending less on funerals to finance their latest craze, gambling. The hugely successful National Lottery, launched last November, has beaten all forecasts, with 30 million people now gambling £100 million ($160 million) on it each week. But while Britons scramble to place their hets, they may be scrimping on other purchases. Spending on undertakers dropped 11.1 per cent during the quarter, to £120 million ($190 million) from £135 million ($215 million) in the previous three months.

George Michael's one-spin hit

LONDON (R) — A long-awaited new single from pop superstar George Michael bas made a once-only appearance on the airwaves, and helped to raise £70,000 ($112,000) for charity. Michael's fans bave been waiting for months to hear the latest song — Jesus For A Child. A protracted legal battle in which the 31-year-old singer is seeking to be released from his contract with recording company Sony had frustrated them. But he agreed the record could be played once as part of an annual appeal for funds for needy children mounted by London radio station Capital FM.

Tyson buys a home for $3.7m

LAS VEGAS, Nevada (AFP) — Former heavyweight champion Mike Tysoo has signed documents for the purchase of a $3.7-millioo home here. Tyson, freed from jail on March 25 after serving time for rape, has been living in this 990m2 luxury home for about a week. The building, built in the style of a French chateau, has seven bedrooms, a wine cellar, a tennis court and a swimming pool.

U.K. telepho codes chang

China provin battles to sav rare birds

Britons seem be buried unde lottery debts

George Micha one-spin hit

Tyson buys a home for $3.7m

French U.N. soldiers carry the coffin containing the body of their killed comrade French Lance-Sergeant Eric Hardoin, 30, into an aircraft at Sarajevo's Airport. Hardoin was killed by a sniper while erecting anti-sniper barricades in the Bosnian capital (AFP photo)

Karadzic: Serbs will fight on until 'the final victory'

BELGRADE (AFP) — Bosnian Serbs will fight on until there is a "final victory if peace is not possible," their leader Radovan Karadzic vowed as be closed a session of the self-styled Bosnian Serb "parliament" at dawn Monday.

The parliament began meeting Saturday at Sansko Most in northwest Bosnia.

"The supreme command and chief-of-staff of tbe army of the Serb Republic (in Bosnia) will take all measures necessary to win a final military victory against the enemy, if a political settlement of the conflict is not reached rapidly," Mr. Karadzic was quoted as saying by the Bosnian Serb News Agency (SRNA) monitored here.

The military situation in the Serb-controlled areas of Bosnia dominated closed-door debates at the parliament, the agency said, without giving details.

The session appears to have been given over to frank talking between the politicians and the military on recent setbacks suffered by Serb forces, particularly in the Mount Vlasic zone of central Bosnia and the Bihac pocket in the northwest.

General Ratko Mladic, commander of the Serb forces, as chief rapporteur to the parliament was called on repeatedly to answer deputies' questions.

The parliament agreed on the need to "strengthen the military capability" of the self-declared Bosnian Serb Republic, Mr. Karadzic said.

But he denied that there had been any disagreement between the political leadership and the military hierarchy.

"As head of state and supreme commander of the armed forces, I have the full support of parliament and the military commanders," he told SRNA.

Mr. Karadzic had called for his authority over the military command to be reinforced at a meeting Friday in Prijedor, in northwest Bosnia. He was backed in his demand by the Democratic Party, which is in the majority in the parliament. But the SRNA's brief report of the parliament's session did not indicate whether the question had been debated.

Mr. Karadzic also cast doubt on the effectiveness of the "contact group" (Britain, France, Germany, Russia, and the United States), wbose plan to carve up Bosnia, giving an equal share to a Muslim-Croat federation, has been rejected by Bosnian Serbs.

"I doubt whether the contact group's initiatives could bring us peace. Other mediators with fewer prejudices would perhaps have more success."

On Sunday Mr. Karadzic said the Serbs side was prepared to look at all ways of ending the tragedy, but he insisted: "The international community must stop aiding Muslims immediately or it will prolong the war."

Mr. Karadzic also announced the formation of a committee bringing together representatives of the Bosnian Serb Republic and the self-proclaimed Serb Republic of Krajina in Croatia "to draw up a plan for the unification of the two states."

Gen. Ratko Mladic

The question, which was to have been one of the main points of the meeting in Sanski Most, was relegated to second place because of reservations on the part of the Krajina leaders, who do not want to hamper Serbia's President Slobodoan Milosevic in his attempt to have sanctions against Belgrade lifted.

"We have followed the advice of the motherland, which asked us not to create a state west of the Drina River (tbe natural border between Serbia and Bosnia), because we are sure that it (Serbia) will play a role in unification of all the Serbs, the self-styled president of Krajina, Milan Martic, was quoted as saying Monday by the Belgrade daily Nasa Borba.

Meanwhile the U.N. Protection Force has resumed flying into besieged Sarajevo on a limited scale, but the humanitarian air bridge remained suspended Monday because of earlier Serb firing at planes, a U.N. official said here.

UNPROFOR was "resuming flights in a progressive way," but was currently restricting tbe categories of passengers flown in the light of objections raised by the Bosnian Serbs, military spokesman Lieutenant-Colonel Gary Coward indicated here.

On Sunday, four UNPROFOR flights landed here and six were planned for Monday. The planes were carrying cargo, U.N. personnel and a limited number of diplomats.

Air links were cut on April 8 after Bosnian Serbs fired at a C-130 transport plane flying in humanitarian aid to the city. The plane was raked by 10 automatic gunfire shots, with at least one impacting on the cockpit screen. There were no injuries.

Flights remained suspended because of the Serbs' refusal "to guarantee the safety."

But the killing of two soldiers from the French contingent Friday and Saturday in Sarajevo gave an opportunity to the United Nations to force the issue.

French Armed Forces Chief-of-Staff Admiral Jacques Lanxade and French Defence Minister Francois Leotard flew in on two separate flights to collect the bodies of the dead soldiers.

Russians forces prepare new attack on Chechen rebel areas

MOSCOW (Agencies) — Russia is preparing a fresh assault on the last rebel bastion in lowland Chechenya after at least 10 servicemen were killed in earlier abortive attacks, ITAR-TASS news agency said Monday.

It quoted military sources in the breakaway region as saying that the assault on the stronghold of Bamut in western Chechenya had been stopped Sunday to avoid further losses among Russian troops but that a decisive assault would be attempted soon.

TASS said the rebels — who have consistently pledged to resist to the last fighter — had rejected a new ultimatum by Russian troops to lay down their arms and surrender.

Russia is keen to put down organised resistance in Chechenya as fast as possible.

Key world leaders, many of them deeply critical of Moscow's bloody Chechen campaign, are due to arrive on May 9 for celebrations marking the 50th anniversary of allied victory in World War II.

With the fall of Bamut, Russia would effectively gain control over the fertile and industrially developed areas in northern and central Chechenya, squeezing the rebels out to remote mountainous areas in the south of the region.

Russia poured troops into Chechenya last December to quell the region's three-year drive for independence.

Thousands of people have been killed and many more have been forced to flee their homes as the military operation, the biggest Moscow has waged since the 10-year Afghan war, devastated the oil-rich territory.

Bamut, situated on a mountain slope, appears to be a tough nut for the Russians to crack because the rebels are sheltering in a heavily-fortified former Soviet missile base, built to resist nuclear attacks.

Even after Moscow drives out rebel forces from all tbeir strongholds it will have to keep a considerable force in the volatile north Caucasus province to tackle guerrilla warfare, which is currently on the rise.

Defence Minister Pavel Grachev said Sunday Moscow could not stick to the 1990 Conventional Forces in Europe Treaty (CFE), which includes limits on deployment of non-nuclear arms in its volatile southern region, until the Chechen conflict was over.

"The amount of arms and military equipment which the treaty allows Russia to have in this region is insufficient," he told Interfax News Agency.

It was unclear whether Gen. Grachev's comments reflected the Kremlin's official position. "We did not receive instructions to comment on Gen. Grachev's statement," a spokesman for President Boris Yeltsin said Monday.

But the statement will undoubtedly set off fresh protests from Russia's Western partners, who have watched Moscow's actions in Chechenya with growing alarm.

The CFE treaty, which includes 30 nations and covers an area from the Atlantic to the Urals, provides for the biggest cuts of conventional weapons in arms control history and stipulates the distribution of troops and armour.

In Gorzny, theoretically under Russian control since mid-February, guerrillas fired shots at a military administration building and in other parts of the town. A captain in the Russian Ministry of Emergency Situations was killed in one of the incidents.

At Stary-Atagui, 25 kilometres south of Grozny, a Russian militaty car escorting a convoy of 10 trucks of humanitarian aid from the Red Cross, drove over a mine and three people were injured, the Russian military command said.

A six-member mission from the Organisation for Security and Cooperation in Europe, which arrived over the weekend in Grozny, was due to begin work Monday.

OSCE special envoy to Chechenya, Istvan Gyarmati, said on arrival that he was outraged by Russian army tactics in the recent capture of the village of Samshki in western Chechenya.

Witnesses have accused the army of carrying out summary executions last week and setting fire to houses with their occupants still inside. Samashki had held out for weeks against Russian attacks and was one of the last remaining pockets of resistance in the republic's western lowlands.

The OSCE announced late last month that its mission, being sent to monitor respect for human rights and report violations, would work with Russian authorities and within the framework of Russian law.

North criticises planned U.S.-S.Korean exercises

SEOUL (AP) — North Korea Monday blasted planned U.S.-South Korean military manoeuvres as a provocation leading to "the brink of war."

But a top U.S. military official defended the combined exercises as necessary for readiness and said there is no link with political developmeots on the Korean peoinsula.

The manoeuvres, scbeduled for later this month, are designed to rebearse how troops in South Korea would be reinforced in a crisis, the Pentagon told reporters Friday.

About 13,000 troops in South Korea will be involved, along witb about 1,300 Americans from other regions. Much of the work will involve logistics experts who would be involved in preparing the way for deployments here if conflict broke out.

North Korea's official news ageocy (KCNA) issued a statement Monday criticising the exercises and attempting to link them with implementation of a 6-month-old accord aimed at dismantling the North's suspect nuclear programme.

"This is a grave military provocation leading the situation on the Korean peninsula to the brink of war and an anti-dialogue, anti-peace, anti-reunification move," KCNA said.

"The U.S. bellicose military quarters and hardline conservatives are intensifying threat and pressure.... The bellicose elements must clearly know that those who are fond of fire are bound to die in the fire."

U.S. Col. Mike Sullivan dismissed any link between the nuclear accord and the manoeuvres, which he said were planned several months ago and also were held last year.

At a briefing for reporters in Seoul, Col. Sullivan listed a variety of exercises that are held each year in South Korea to maintain readiness and enforce continuity in a U.S. military force tbat is constantly changing due to the average soldier's ooe-year stint.

"It would be unconscionable not to train in a robust, vigorous way with what you're faced with in the Nortb and their potential," Col. Sullivan said.

North Korea's military is more than 1 million strong, with two-thirds deployed within 100 kilometres of the demilitarised zone that separates the two Koreas, making it the world's most heavily guarded border.

"By any standard, they are well-equipped and vigorously trained," Col. Sullivan said.

He said the forward-deployed group includes more than 80,000 special forces commandos and is backed by thousands of artillery pieces, hundreds of whicb are capable of reaching Seoul.

Still, he downplayed any suggestion of increased tensions on the peninsula.

"Not once in the 20-something months I've been here has anyone in this command seen anything contrued as particularly threatening out of North Korea," Col. Sullivan said.

He said this month's exercises are particularly important because tbe U.S. contingent of 37,000 troops makes up only about 5 per cent of the military force in South Korea, so reinforcements would be crucial in the event of conflict.

The primary U.S.-South Korean exercise, Team Spirit, bas been cancelled the last two years in an effort to ease tensions with the North and convince it to abide by the nuclear accord that was signed last October between the North and the United States.

It calls for the bardline Communist state to dismantle its nuclear programme, suspected of weapons development, in exchange for two light-water reactors tbat produce far less weapons-grade plutonium, along with other economic and diplomatic incentives.

The accord has bogged down recently over wbo will provide the reactors.

The North has rejected reactors from South Korea, citing safety concerns, but the real reason is believed to be national pride.

Japan cult leader ordered gas production

TOKYO (R) — The leader of a Japanese doomsday cult ordered followers to produce the deadly gas sarin, the type of nerve gas used in attacks on Tokyo subways, media reports said Monday.

Tokyo Broadcasting System (TBS) said the order from cult guru Shoko Asahara was mentioned in a detailed joomal of tbe Aum Shinri Kyo (Supreme Truth Sect) confiscated by police.

The journal, kept by members of the sect's "science and technology ministry," quoted Asahara as saying: "Making sarin is a very hazardous undertaking. When carrying this out, you need much courage."

Police refused to comment on the report. So far, police have arrested about 100 cult members, including six senior officials, on various charges ranging from abduction to illegal production of weapons.

The cult has been the focus of massive police raids since the March 20 subway attacks, but police have not linked the 10,000-strong sect directly to the attacks in which 12 people were killed and thousands injured.

However, they have found a huge chemical stockpile, including all the ingredients of sarin, a laboratoty and a plant at the sect's complex in Kamiku Isshiki, at the foot of Mt. Fuji west of Tokyo, that could have been used to make sarin.

Asahara has not been seen in public since the day before the subway attacks.

The cult also tried to arm itself with guns and tanks through "Russian connections," said Japanese news agency reported.

Kyodo News Agency quoted police as saying a senior sect leader attempted to buy tanks from Russia and to make guns from parts bought in Russia.

Kyodo said the sect's "construction minister" visited Russia several times to explore weapons purchases.

Police regard the man, who was not identified, as the deputy of Asahara, the 40-year-old sect leader.

Kyodo said the "construction minister" was involved in the sect's purchase of a Russian helicopter last June for some 78 million yen ($950,000).

He invited Russian engineers to Japan last September through a Japanese travel agency that handles Russian tours so that the helicopter could be modified for the sect's needs.

Kyodo gave no other details.

Last week, Russian President Boris Yeltsin ordered a full investigation into the activities of the sect, which says it has 30,000 members in Russia. A Moscow court has frozen the sect's bank assets and ordered its property confiscated.

Meanwhile, Tokyo appeared back to normal Monday, four weeks after the subway attacks, after living the weekend under heavy security following a disaster prophecy by Asahara.

Helicopters patrolled over Tokyo and 20,000 police watched over public transport, department stores, stadiums, airports and theatres in the city of 12 million people.

Asahara said that on Saturday there would be a disaster worse than last January's Kobe earthquake in which 5,500 people died.

Winnie Mandela quits day before termination

SOWETO (AP) — Winnie Mandela announced she was resigning from ber estranged husband's cabinet Monday, a day before her dismissal takes effect.

Mrs. Mandela's decision, announced to reporters gathered at her Soweto home, could defuse tension between her and President Nelson Mandela. Mrs. Mandela said she was stepping down to pursue "more pressing" interests, including supporting Mr. Mandela's African National Congress.

"I shall continue my duties as an ANC member of parliament," she said solemnly to dozens of foreign and local journalists. "As I have done in the past, I shall continuously give support and full attention to the needs of our people out on the ground."

Mr. Mandela first fired his wife as deputy minister of arts, culture, science and technology on March 27, following her involvement in a string of embarrassing incidents. Mrs. Mandela went to court to challenge her firing, prompting the president to re-hire her just long enough to dress a second dismissal, announced Friday, in constitutional trappings.

The dismissal was to have become official Tuesday. Mrs. Mandela was replaced by human rights lawyer Brigitte Mabandla.

Mrs. Mandela said that she had gone to court "in furtherance of democracy in order to enforce proper behaviour from the highest office in the land" and demanded that reasons be given for her dismissal.

More Tajik rebels killed in clashes

DUSHANBE (R) — More Tajik rebels bave been killed on the volatile Tajik-Afghan frontier by Russian-led Border Guards as fighting spread to a previously quiet western area, a guards spokesman said Monday.

U.N.-brokered talks between the Tajikistan government and opposition leaders to try to quell fighting, now into its second week and which Russian President Boris Yeltsin fears could drag his force into another protracted ethnic conflict, were postponed Monday until later this week.

In the first of two incidents, a group of rebels crossing the border from Afghan soil into the Western Moskovskiy region were killed Sunday after refusing orders to go back.

Separately, another Tajik rebel was shot dead as he tried to cross into Tajikistan near Khorog in the eastern region of Gorno- Badakhshan — where fighting over the last 10 days has killed 41 Border Guards and hundreds of rebels — the spokesman said.

There were no Border Guards casualties in the two clashes.

The spokesman said Border Guards Command had obtained intelligence that rebel fighters planned an assault on border posts in the Khorog sector after regrouping. One rebel leader has died and one was wounded in the recent action.

Rebel fighters based in Gorno-Badakshan have allied with Islamic militants operating out of bases in northern Afghanistan in their most effective joint action since losing a civil war two years ago in which thousands of people died.

But Russian Border Guards Commander Anatoly Chechul said Sunday he had seen no evidence of a detacbment of Islamic fighters said by opposition leaders to be heading towards Gorno-Badakshan from northern Afghanistan.

Kiev needs $45b to close Chernobyl

KIEV (R) — The bead of Ukraine's nuclear power authority told the west bluntly Monday his country could not honour its pledge to close Chernobyl by the year 2000 without major financial help.

Mikhail Umanets told a news conference the West would bave to belp come up with about $4.5 billion to close Chernobyl and build a replacement for the station, site of the world's worst nuclear accident on April 26, 1986.

"The political decision (to close the station) is just a skeleton, though a good one," Mr. Umanets said after discussing the promise to close the facility with President Leonid Kuchma.

"To put meat on it means resolving the technical issues, and the blood which will put it on its feet is financing. And everyone will have to sweat buckets to pull it off."

Mr. Kuchma last week promised Ukraine would close Chernobyl within five years, provided the West helped.

But he disclosed no figures on bow much the operation would cost and a visiting European Union delegation pressing for its closure gave no guarantees on financing.

A fire and explosion at the station's fourth reactor nine years ago sent a cloud of radiation across most of Europe and contaminated large swathes of Ukraine, Belarus and Russia.

Mr. Umanets said Ukraine was to draw up a timetable by May 15 on closing the station, and said the West was to come up with a financing plan by July.

"We believe that in July we will also see a financing programme. If we do not, we will consider our talks with the West as not serious," Mr. Umanets said.

"I think the (European Union) delegation was aware when it left Ukraine that without money we cannot do anything."

Energy-poor Ukraine had previously resisted pressure from the West to close Chernobyl by saying it needed the electricity provided by the plant's two working reactors — about five per cent of power produced in the country.

Mr. Umanets said Ukraine would insist on financing to build a new power station, possibly a gas-fired plant, and erect a new "tomb" over the station's stricken fourth reactor to replace the cracked original erected hastily after the disaster.

Chernobyl's director, Sergei Parashin, last week proposed building a gas-fired plant and suggested 18 Western countries and Ukraine could each contribute about $200 million.

Mr. Parshin told Monday's news conference Chernobyl's safety record was as good as Ukraine's other four nuclear power plants. He said his plant could function for many years if the West failed to come up with the financing.

"The faster it is financed the faster we will close it. If the money comes through in three months, we'll close it in three months," Mr. Parashin said. "If they can't finance it at all, the station will keep working another 16 years."

14 Christian hostages die in Philippine carnage

ZAMBOANGA, Philippines (R) — Muslim extremists killed 14 Chrisitan hostages in a violent orgy, mutilating and beheading some of them, while fleeing pursuing troops in the southern Philippines, a survivor said Monday.

But the rebels spared [illegible] be a government engineer with whom army officers say one of the guerrillas has fallen in love.

One other hostage escaped the mass execution carried out early Saturday by the fundamentalist Abu Sayyaf guerrillas, survivor Rustico Secundo told reporters.

More than 2,000 soldiers have been pursuing the guerrillas in the mountainous Zamboanga peninsula since the band sacked the town of Ipil on April 4 and killed 53 mostly unarmed civilians.

In Manila, President Fidel Ramos called a meeting of the National Security Council for Friday to discuss the threat from the Abu Sayyaf and intelligence reports that they were getting Russian-made weapons from Afghanistan.

Mr. Secundo, taken to a Zamboanga hospital with slash wounds after being rescued by soldiers Sunday, said he overheard the guerrillas saying the hostages "had become extra baggage" and had to be killed to hasten their withdrawal.

"I kept praying Psalm 23, 'the lord is my shepherd. I shall not want'. I kept repeating the prayer when they started hacking us."

Mr. Secundo said of his mortally wounded companions: "I heard them calling their mother's names as they lay dying."

Those killed had grown too weak to carry on after their captors forced them to act as porters, sometimes carrying their firearms or duffel bags filled with bundles of money the rebels looted from banks in Ipil, he said.

The deaths brought to at least 20 the number of hostages killed since the start of the manhunt for the raiders. A survivor has alleged that one of them was a 14-year-old boy the guerrillas slaughtered before eating his flesh for lunch.

Forty guerrillas have died in clashes with troops, the military said.

About 200 rebels took part in the Ipil attack, seen as an escalation of fundamentalist violence in the southern islands, where various Muslim groups are fighting for autonomy.

About half of the group escaped by sea while the rest retreated into the mountains.

The army deployed extra troops in Pagadian and General Santos cities as well as in Sarangani province and other southern areas to ward off any further raids following sightings of boatloads of suspected Abu Sayyaf men, Brigadier-General Renato Garcia said.

Police around Manila have been on the alert for a week in fear of guerrilla strikes in the city of 8.5 million people.

"I saw how they beheaded (some of) my companions," Mr. Secundo told reporters.

Hacked in the neck and backside, the 24-year-old farmer survived by playing dead and floating in a mangrove swamp until soldiers came.

He said the lone woman with them, whom the rebels call "Jojo" was alive and had been taken away by the guerrillas.

The military said an engineer of the Bureau of Public Highways, named Jocelyn Ortega, was the lone woman among the 37 hostages seized by the Ipil raiders as human shields.

General Rene Cardones said one of the rebels had been personally taking care of Ms. Ortega and this could only mean he had fallen for her and "intends to marry her."

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Chairman of the Board of Directors:
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GEORGE S. HAWATMEH

Editorial and advertising offices:
Jordan Press Foundation,
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Telex: **21497 ALRAI JO**
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Going wide but not far

ISRAELI PRIME Minister Yitzhak Rahin got closer than ever to clearing the cobwebs from his vision for the future of the Gaza Strip and the West Bank when he told a U.S. news magazine Monday that he does not "believe that the whole land of Israel should be a Jewish state."

"It will not work. It will he Bosnia" Mr. Rabin went on to say.

The Israeli prime minister amplified his new thinking about the fate of the occupied territories hy stating that he would like to see next to Israel a Palestinian entity in most or in considerahle areas of the West Bank. As for Gaza Strip, Rahin appears to be supportive of his Foreign Minister Shimon Peres' earlier proposal to turn the Strip into a sovereign Palestinian state.

The Palestinian reaction to the suggestion that the Gaza Strip be the aspired to Palestinian state was understandahly quick and blunt when the thought was rejected outright by the Palestinian National Authority (PNA) because it seems to cut off the Strip from the Palestinian hinterland. This rejection has to be justified since creating a mini Palestinian state in the trouhled and beleaguered Gaza area can only be an attempt to divide the Palestinian territories and treat them differently, thereby prolonging and belabouring the process of settling the Palestinian prohlem. This is over and above the fact that the Strip is not viable for statehood geographically, economically or politically.

As for Rabin's futuristic outlook for the West Bank, we see trouble ahead over the full political import of a Palestinian entity that would be sanctioned there. To begin with, there are no clear precedents under international law. As far as we can detect, a political entity can only be conceived within the context of a federation or confederation and even then it will have to be a state as is the case in the U.S. or a province as is the case in the Canadian Federation. If Rahin seeks the creation of a hi-national country then he must be more forthcoming. Otherwise we see no way that a mere Palestinian entity deprived of all features of statehood can be seriously entertained as a final solution. Since both Rahin and Peres have gone to the length of spelling out their vision for the future of the Palestinian lands, they might as well go the extra mile in articulating a more coherent policy whose end result would bring about true and lasting peace.

ARABIC PRESS COMMENTARIES

CRITICISING AS insufficient the U.N. Security Council Resolution 986, which allowed Iraq to sell limited amounts of oil to buy food and medicine, a writer in Al Ra'i said that the Iraqi leadership has all the right to reject the resolution and demand that the sanctions be lifted altogether. Indeed, said Mahmoud Rimawi, the resolution did not reflect the desires of major powers, like France, Russia and China, which had lohbied for a total end to the embargo clamped on Iraq in 1990. Though the new resolntion did not give the United Nations a mandate to handle the exports and left the whole matter to the Iraqi government, Baghdad has seen the resolution an infringement on its sovereignty, said the writer. But the new resolution, said the writer, should prompt the Iraqi government to intensify its diplomatic offensive at the pan-Arab and international levels to secure the complete lifting of the sanctions, which have been maintained so far largely due to America's influence on other nations.

DESCRIBING THE killing of three Arab youths in Hehron by Israeli security forces Sunday as a cold-hlooded murder. Al Dustour daily said that the incident was bound to invite further counter attacks by the Palestinians and an escalation of the cycle of violence in the occupied territories. Killing the youths merely upon suspicion that they are wanted militants reflects Israel's total disregard to Arab lives and points to the fact that the Israeli authorities are determined to hlock all paths leading to security and peace, said the daily. Killing suspected people without ascertaining their real identity was a premeditated murder and a crime that can only add more obstacles in the path of peace, added the daily. What can Israel now expect from this murder, and the continued siege on the Palestinian people? asked the daily.

The View from Fourth Circle

By Rami G. Khouri

University kids, tribalism and jamborees ancient and modern

THE LINGERING ramifications of the clashes between Circassian and Salti youths at the University of Jordan raise several key issues that have enormous implications for much larger questions of communal identity, nationhood and statehood in Jordan and the entire Middle East. Prime Minister Sherif Zeid Ben Shaker accurately pinpointed the bigger issue when he said last week that "national unity and the rule of law remain among the major priorities of the government at a time when efforts are being exerted towards constructing a modern state."

National unity, the rule of law and constructing a modern state are huge components of the contemporary Jordanian experience, but they are not the total picture. The key other element that remains unaddressed is that of tribalism and tribal identity. We should not refrain from addressing it, because it remains absolutely crucial to our prospects of developing viable, stable and durahle modern Arab states.

Tribalism is central to this issue, as evidence by the dramatic manner in which the prime minister himself set out to resolve the problem by meeting with tribal leaders from both parties to the clashes at the university. He was correct to do so, and both parties ratified his approach by indicating their desire to resolve the prohlem throngh traditional tribal means of conflict-resolution. As such, tribalism is both part of the prohlem that surfaced at the university, but also part of the solution.

The challenge of building a modern state that is based on respect for the rule of law requires that we approach this matter with clear recognition of the trihal nature of our society. Many people, especially those influenced by and enamored with Western brands of statehood, view tribalism as a negative, old-fashioned mode of social configuration. I think this is a mistaken view.

Tribalism is a social and even a national reality that has defined our region of the world for thousands of years. The durability of tribalism reflects its relevance to the majority of people in two key aspects of their lives: It satisfactorily manifests their human identity, and it assures them the sort of personal and communal well-being that people in the Western industrialised states obtain from the legal guarantees of their constitutions and laws.

Tribalism in our lands is having to coexist with the more modern systems of laws and centralised state power that are a direct consquence of the post-colonial experience of independent statehood. The reality that bas defined our lands for thousands of years is that tribalism has usually coexisted with "statehood," "nationalism" and other large national configurations. Tribalism and productive, durable states are not necessarily mutnally exclusive. The key is to reconcile the two in a manner that does not ravage or ignore the tribal reality.

The most common "national" configuration throughout Middle Eastern history has been that of the tribal confederacy. The configuration has worked because it successfully bridges the space between individual tribal identity and the larger imperative of national bulk (or what the technocrats would call today "economies of scale)."

The fact that a clash between students at a university in Jordan should need to be resolved through traditional tribal means in the closing years of the second millennium AD — about eight thousands years after tribalism was born with the advent of the settled village and its grazing and cultivated lands — suggests that a) kids will be kids, b) tribes remain powerful components of our identity, and, c) modern statehood should take note of both a) and b) if the challenge of huilding a sustainable state based on laws is to be successfully met.

The modern political structures that we imported from the former Western colonial powers have not worked very well in most Arab countries. In Jordan, it is interesting to note that continued democratisation and liberalisation have both tended to promote greater tribalism, as evidenced by the results of the 1993 elections. In Arab countries that collapsed or were plunged into violent warfare, such as Lebanon, Yemen and Somalia, we also see tribalism emerging as the preferred means of survival. So, the lesson, much as many amongst us may wish to avoid it, is: Whether through orderly democratisation or domestic national incoherence, Arab culture will inevitably gravitate to tribalism as the dominant, anthentic and time-tested form of national configuration.

We should accept this reality and try to huild upon it, instead of trying to avoid it. Tribalism is not shameful or primitive, but it is traditional and pre-modern. The real test we face is how to modernise tribalism, so that it achieves two important goals: a) to absorh some of the principles of late 18th century North Atlantic repuhlicanism that were devised in France and the United States, and that many Arabs seem to like, and, h) to adapt to the reality that Arah society today, unlike its many historical antecedents, is predominantly urban, centrally politically controlled at home, and suhjugated hy and often dependent upon Western political and economic power.

In Jordan's case, it is also interesting to note that the really successful institutions are the ancient indigenous ones, such as family, tribe, monarchy, and a general patriarchal mode that requires, for instance, the return of the prime minister to resolve a clash between students at a leading university. This is intriguing, but not necessarily negative.

The parallel important question is: If we are trying to build a modern state based on the rule of law — a good goal, we all agree — why was the rule of law not used in the University of Jordan case to identity the tronble makers or guilty parties and send them before a court of law?

The answer, much as some people may not like it, or may wish to deny it, is: Because tribalism is a more effective, credible and merciful means of conflict-resolntion than the modern legal system in Jordan in the closing years of the second millennium AD.

An interesting, if awkward, qnestion arises: Had these clashes taken place between, say, Egyptian farm workers and Sri Lankan maids, would the dispute have had to await the return of the prime minister, or would the authorities have quickly applied the rule of law?

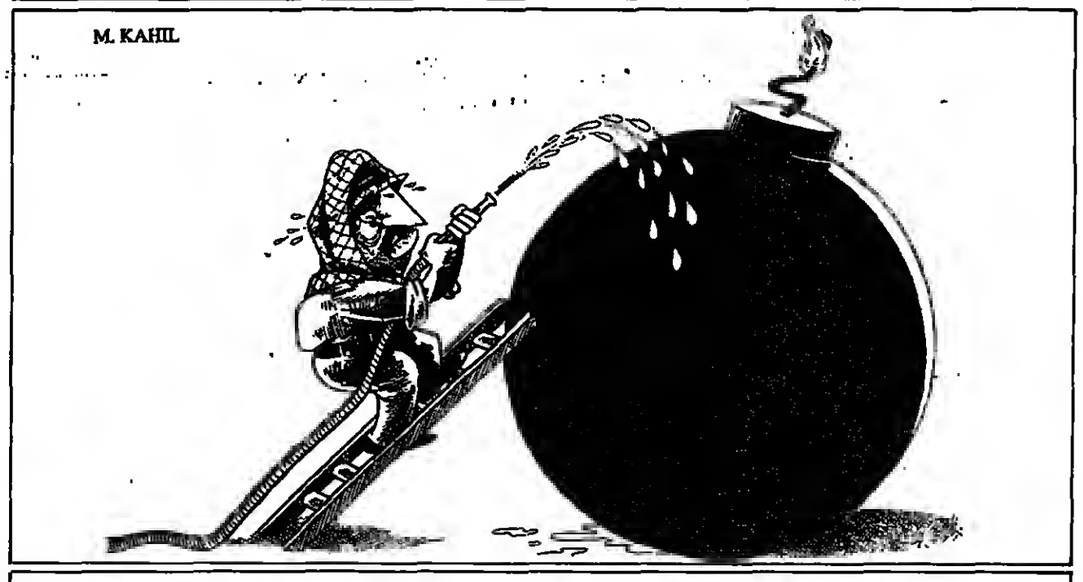
I suspect that if we put some of our best legal, political and tribal minds to it, we could probably come up with a formula that successfully modernises tribalism and gives h coherent political expression, within a model of statehood that honours national unity without totally demolishing the tribal unity that is so much older and stronger that the modern Euro-style state. Why are we so mesmerised by the secular republicanism jamboree that took place along the North Atlantic rim about two and a quarter centuries ago, to the extent that we ignore ancient and rather nifty systems of national configuration that have responded to most of our indigenous needs for most of the known history of settled human history on earth?

The key to resolving this issue perhaps might be found within the underlying sentiment that sparked the university clashes: Honour. The trihal confederacies of old worked because they assured people's material and emotional needs; they generated pasturage, water and wheat fields, along with a sense of dignity that came from the collective recognition of the identity and rights of the tribe. Transgressions by individuals were resolved through the collectivity of the entire tribe. Honour was preserved. Peace usually prevailed.

Perhaps honour itself is a silly concept to have to deal with. That, however, is not easily resolved by mortals. We may not be able to eliminate honour as a passionate instigator of social actions. We can, however, temper it with coherent social relationships and rational national configurations, even in the post-colonial Arab World. To do so, we will have to do two things that we have not done to date, due to our enchantment with the smells that come out of the kitchens of colonial heartlands: We will have to stop simplistically copying Western political systems and structures, and we will have to appreciate the constructive aspects of many of our ancient ways that can be modernised for today's world.

Perhaps the professors and students at the University of Jordan could hold a conference on the suhject, to show us the way forward to a more enlightened future. This, after all, is the role of a university — to engage in energetic, honest discussion of new ideas, in order to seek the truth, and to forge a better society that is based on self-evident, indigenous truths that dignify human beings and institutionalise merciful conflict-resolution in order to preserve social peace. It's also the role of a modern state based on laws. It's also what tribalism has done for thousands of years. Somewhere in there, one suspects, is a modern nation-building jamboree waiting to take place.

M. KAHIL



Policies of aggression

By G. H. Jansen

IS THE U.S. gearing up for a second military adventure in the Middle East? A repeat of "Desert Shield" and "Desert Storm?" This question is prompted by the steady and increasing drumroll of U.S. propaganda against not just Iraq but now also against Iran and Libya. The latest example was the speech made by U.S. Secretary of State Warren Christopher to a Jewish group in Washington on Tuesday, April 4, in which he referred to Iraq and Iran as "those who rogue states." He also expressed opposition to Iran's plans to increase its military strength and against any relaxation of U.N. sanctions against Iraq.

Earlier on that same day, the secretary of state bad inaccurately claimed that the U.S. bad evidence that Iraq was trying to build up its biological weapons "for offensive purposes." President Bill Clinton himself had to set the record straight — that the U.S. "evidence" referred to the past and not to the present. A few days earlier Wasbington had accused Iran of placing biological weapons on islands in the mouth of the Straits of Hormuz, thus, it was claimed, endangering the world supply of oil passing through the Straits. And then the president banned the U.S. oil company, Conco, from proceeding with a contract to export oil from Iranian oilfields that it has developed. Reports from Washington claim that this could be the start of a U.S. campaign to ban all economic relations with Iran.

In the past month tbe U.S. put a strain on its relations with Russia, when it vigorously, publicly, hut unsuccessfully, attempted to get Russia not to sell nuclear reactors to Iran.

As with U.N. sanctions against Iraq the U.S. opposes the lifting of sanctions against Libya because of its refusal to hand over two Libyans accused of being responsible for the Lockerbie plane bombing.

The important point is that the evidence of Iranian weapons in the Strait of Hormuz, based entirely on satellite pbotos, and on the involvement of the two Lihyans, is extremely shaky and the fact that the U.S. is basing its hate campaign on such evidence is itself evidence that the U.S. is determined to press its case against tbese coontries, with or without reason and come what may.

Already there are vague hints of military action against Iraq, even before the latest wave of threats of forcible action to rescue the two American intelligence operatives imprisoned in Iraq for illegally crossing the frontier from Kuwait.

What could be the possible motivation for this extended campaign of demonisation against these three countries? U.S. analysts have provided two answers, both unsatisfactory: to preempt any weakening of the U.N. sanctions against Iraq and Libya, and to "throttle" the Iranian economy as Iran tries to rehuild its military capability.

But those "reasons" merely take the questions back to another layer of questioning. Why should the U.S. follow such a vindictive and punitive policy against these three countries? What bave Iran, Iraq and Libya done to hurt any of America's national interests in the Middle East?

The surprising answer is "nothing." Support to "terrorist" groups and "opposition to Israeli-Arab peace," which are the reasons given by Washington, do not directly impinge on any U.S. national interest.

But they do impinge directly on the interests of Israel whicb, through American Zionist groups, now directs U.S. policy in the region.

Thus, Iran's development of its military strength is no conceivahle threat to the U.S., nor is Iraq's possible development of a germ bomb. But these countries are threats to Israel, according to tbe Israelis.

During "Desert Storm" Iraq fired half a dozen inaccurate "Scud" missiles at Israel whicb, with conventional warheads, killed only a hand-full of Israelis. But what if the missiles were of a later more accurate model and were tipped with a weapon of mass destruction as warheads?

The anti-Libyan motivation is different from the Iraq-Iran one. Libya is no military threat to Israel but Colonel Muammer Qadhafi's defiant and independent stance on the Lockerbie suspects is just one manifestation of how he challenges the dominant and domineering position in the whole area that the U.S. "enoys" and to which Israel aspires, on its own and in its own right. So Libya has to be chastened and hrought to heel.

This is what Warren Christopher means when he talks about "rogue states." For "rogue" read "independent." On the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty, India is a "rogue state." As is Pakistan. Egypt is trying to qualify its signature and Syria has refused to sign unless Israel — the real regional "rogue" which both refuses to accede and has a stockpile of 200 nuclear bombs — does as well.

But demonisation can be counterproductive if the U.S. goes on persecuting Iraq even after Baghdad has ceased to be any threat to its neighbours, which is the routine accusation made against the country.

The Israeli/U.S. alarm and despondency about Iran's nuclear "threat" is merely preemptive and precautionary because Israeli nuclear weapons experts admit — openly — that it would take around 10 years for Iran to produce a weapon with a delivery system.

The U.S. is in danger of talking itself into a position where it has to do something drastic against an enemy — who is not really an enemy of the U.S. — but whom the U.S. public has been conditioned, brainwashed, into thinking of as not merely an enemy but as a dangerous and treacherous foe.

Philippine religious passions turn to politics

By Alistair McIntosh
Reuter

MANILA — The Philippines' exuberant and often bloody display of Easter religious fervour ended on Sunday to be replaced by election politics, an equally bloody and no less consuming passion.

Appropriately for Asia's only Christian nation, political analysts make liberal use of hiblical metaphor in looking ahead to legislative and local government elections on May 8.

Nobody normally dies in the crucifixion reenactments and flagellations that mark the Thursday-to-Sunday Easter celebration in the Philippines.

But at least half a dozen people have died so far in the violence that traditionally accompanies Philippine elections.

Newspaper columnists and editorial writers draw parallels between Christ's sufferings on the cross and those of the Filipino people at the hands of politicians who lie and cheat with such abandon they could make a pharisee blush.

Others see brotherhood between the temple priests who bribed Judas Iscariot into betraying Jesus and Filipino officials who will do anything to ensure pro-government candidates get elected.

Less depressingly, others see in the resurrection the Filipino ability to bounce back from natural catastrophe, political upheaval and diplomatic setbacks — a track record of recent history that led one Manila headline writer to ask, "are we a nation of losers?"

More prosaically, others regard the polls as a referendum on President Fidel Ramos, the first Protestant leader in this overwhelmingly Roman Catholic nation of 65 million people.

Mr. Ramos, halfway through the single six-year term allowed by the constitution, needs election success for his ruling party candidates to ensure the economic reforms to which he is committed are not thwarted by the senate and congress.

Despite his achievements in bringing the Philippines from zero to more than five per cent gross national product growtb, analysts say Mr. Ramos is beset by a series of problems over which he has little control.

"No government in the post-war repuhlic has been assailed simultaneously by so many domestic and foreign policy issues as the Ramos administration," wrote veteran columnist Amando Doronila in top-selling daily Inquirer on Sunday.

"Ramos is dog-paddling in a sea of trouhles," wrote the more acerhic Max Soliven in the Philippine Star.

Top of the list is Singapore's execution of Filipina maid Flor Contemplacion last month after repeated pleas for a stay of execution — including two personal appeals from Mr. Ramos.

The hanging of a woman many Filipinos believe was innocent despite her repeated confessions has inflamed people who see her as a symbol of the more than four million Filipinos forced to seek work overseas because of poverty at bome.

Next comes what Mr. Doronila described as "China's creeping territorial expansion" in the South China Sea's spratly islands at the expense of Philippine claims.

Diplomats and political analysts say China has deliberately picked the Philippines, perceived as militarily the weakest of the Southeast Asian nations with competing claims in the Spratlys, to test the region's resolve.

China dismisses all rival claims to tbe disputed South China Sea islands and rejects multilateral negotiations.

The third crisis is a sudden and brutal eruption of Islamic extremist violence in the southern Pbilippines by a group

Analysts credit Mr. Ramos, a former forces chief, with responding firmly on all three fronts. Will the voters agree?

"This is a powder keg," commented the head of a leading Manila public relations firm. "Anything can bappen."

Problems facing Gazan students in the West Bank

By Nigel Parry

DURING THE first term of Bir Zeit University's 1994-95 academic year, over a third of its 350 students from Gaza were not granted permission to attend classes. Half way through the term, Israel agreed to grant nearly three quarters of these students permission to study if they signed a declaration saying they supported the current peace process. They were to be "guinea pigs," their behaviour determining when the other 1,300 students from the Gaza Strip in higher education in the West Bank would be granted permits, according to a letter from Yitzhak Rabin, in his capacity as defence minister, to Al Haq on Dec. 13.

With the peace negotiations seemingly hopelessly stalled, Gazan students' right to study in West Bank institutions has come to be used by Israel as a bargaining chip for the far higher and more tangible stakes of land, settlements and security. The students themselves, real people with real hopes and aspirations, a fact almost too obvious to state but one that either has evaded or does not concern the Israelis in the least, are trapped in a difficult situation. With 8,000 teenagers finishing secondary school in Gaza each year, a figure five times greater than the capacity of the Strip's two tertiary institutions, access to higher education in the West Bank is a necessity for these people.

Restricted movements

Since the killing of an Israeli teenager in a suburb of Tel Aviv in May 1992, there have been severe restrictions on Palestinians' movement in and out of the Gaza Strip. Gazan students must now hold concurrently no less than three separate permits, each with its own separate application procedure, in order to pursue higher education in the West Bank. The first, a magnetic identity card necessary for leaving the Strip, allows Israel to track by computer the exact dates an individual exits and reenters. The second permit is necessary for travel through the part of Israel between the Strip and the West Bank, and will only be granted to students who sign the aforementioned "oath of loyalty" to the peace process. Usually valid for only two days, it must be followed by the third permit allowing residence in the West Bank. As if the application procedure for the three were not bad enough, with a minimum of 22 hours standing in line usually required, each permit can only be issued on condition that the student passes a "security" check. And the granting of one permit does not guranatee the issuing of the rest. Although the academic term generally runs for four months, the residence permit is usually only valid for three months and its renewal is far from automatic.

The process is characterised, above all, by its arbitrary nature. Students, refused several successive applications on "security grounds" may unexpectedly be granted a permit and permits are often refused to students with no record of security offences. Valid permits are often confiscated by soldiers at checkpoints or cancelled en masse in the wake of "security" incidents when Israel seals off the occupied territories.

For those who fall foul of this labyrinth, there is no educational alternative in Gaza, which boasts an unemployment rate of 45 per cent. Israel's policy frightens students into staying in the West Bank during university holidays in case they cannot get back to their studies. For students who are denied permits, refused extensions or have their permit invalidated through a blanket cancellation, the inducement to carry out their education without consent from Israel is great. In order to get out of Gaza, students hang onto the axles of lorries or hide in trucks carrying fruit and other goods, swim around the border into Israel, or bluff their way across the quieter border points using Egyptian identity documents. Students already at the university travel to and from their homes nervously avoiding checkpoints. Such students are considered by Israel as illegally continuing their education and are therefore in danger of detention, large fines and, in some cases, even torture. Three large-scale night raids on Gazan students' accommodation took place in 1994.

Albert Aghazarian, the director of public relations at Bir Zeit, believes that Israel intentionally makes use of the students' tenuous status in the West Bank to target and manipulate individuals it wishes to harass or use for its own ends. A recent publication of the Human Rights Action Project (HRAP) at Bir Zeit entitled Making Education Illegal — Students from the Gaza Strip, the most comprehensive report on the issue to date, includes the case of a Bir Zeit student called Faisal that illustrates this conclusion. Faisal was arrested on his way home from the university in the wake of the blanket cancellation of permits following the Oct. 19 bus bombing in Tel Aviv. Despite the immediate intervention of university officials at the scene, Faisal was taken to the interrogation wing of Ramallah Prison to be interrogated by agents of Shin Bet. He had been arrested, fined and deported to Gaza for a permit violation earlier in the year.

The agenda of the Shin Bet officers was to recruit Faisal as a collaborator, providing them with information about political activity and activits at the university. They offered money and permits to study if he agreed. When he refused, the officers called up his file on the computer and threatened to rape his mother and sister. He was beaten until his arm broke and one of his eardrums was damaged. The senior Shin Bet officer commanded the others to leave the room and took out his gun. While removing all the bullets except one, he said: "You only have one choice, to work with us. If you don't I will kill you." Showing Faisal the remaining bullet, he closed the chamber and spun it, telling him. "You have three seconds to agree to work for us. Do you want to pray before you die?" Counting to three, the commander pointed the gun at his head and pulled the trigger, but the gun clicked on an empty chamber. Repeating his threats, he pulled the trigger again with the same result.

Faisal was eventually fined and released, having his magnetic identity card confiscated, on condition that he return to Gaza. But the severity of his injuries necessitated medical treatment, which delayed him for a few days, after which he decided to remain in West Bank to complete his studies. His house was raided about a month later, and even though he had been sleeping on the roof to avoid detection, he was discovered and deported back to Gaza on condition that he withdrew a complaint he had filed against the Shin Bet.

Disinformation

Organisations that protest the denial of education to a desperate population come up against the widespread disinformation that Israel releases to cloud this issue. In April-May 1994, London-based Friends of Bir Zeit University (FBZU) launched a campaign on behalf of Gazan students. At the end of June the Israeli embassy's standard response to enquirers was to blame the new Palestine National Authority (PNA) for any problems with permits. In fact the systematic and widespread denial of permits had nothing to do with the PNA as Israel had retained the power to grant or deny them.

Throughout the year, Israeli disinformation to individuals and MPs writing in protest continued. On Nov. 3, London Ambassador Moshe Raviv, writing in response to a question raised by Mike Watson, about the fate of 29 Bir Zeit students arrested in April, claimed "these students have since returned to their studies with valid permits". Yet no permits had been issued to any Gazan students since the Tel Aviv bus bombing of Oct. 19, and were not issued to some until Dec. 7, one month later. After consulting with the Israeli prime minister's office on Dec. 22, Foreign Office representative Guy Pollard joyfully told FBZU that "students in Gaza wishing to pursue studies in the West Bank would now be free to do so." Yet Mr. Rabin's office had issued a statement to Al Haq a fortnight earlier outlining the new "loyalty oath."

The writer is Public Relations Officer at Bir Zeit University. The article is reprinted from Middle East International.

Bosnian forces rush to a helicopter to evacuate injured soldiers near the frontline southeast of Sarajevo (AFP)

Bosnian army gaining battlefield credibility

By Kurt Schork
Reuter

SARAJEVO — The Muslim-led Bosnian government army has emerged from three years of war as a credible fighting force capable of punishing separatist Serbs on a number of fronts, according to U.N. military officers.

To do so, it has overcome the handicaps of a U.N. arms embargo and the fact that it had to be built from scratch when fighting began in 1992.

"The Bosnian army is much better trained and equipped and they seem to have learned not to overextend themselves," said a senior U.N. officer who asked not to be named.

"Because of their relative lack of armour and artillery they don't have the ability to concentrate attacks and decisively defeat their enemy. But they are chipping away at the Serbs and defending the ground they take."

Recent television pictures of fighting on Mount Vlasic, where the army captured a communications tower from the Serbs, stirred Bosnian Muslims like no other footage of the war.

Gone are the days of embarrassing propaganda films on government television showing Bosnian soldiers in tennis shoes and ill-matched uniforms storming buildings in mock actions.

The Vlasic pictures showed a well-equipped army using tanks and artillery in deep snow on rugged terrain, seizing and defending an objective which had long eluded their grasp.

"We have gone from the defensive to the offensive," explained Bosnian army Brigadier General Jovan Divjak.

"Vlasic was a significant victory over a much superior aggressor under very difficult weather conditions."

Bosnia had no army when it gained independence from the former Yugoslavia was immediately set upon by Serb forces intent upon dismembering the new nation.

Gangsters, policemen and shopkeepers manned barricades in Sarajevo, fending off Serb tanks with rifles and shotguns.

The arms embargo made little difference to Bosnian Serbs who got armour, artillery and ammunition from Belgrade.

But for the Bosnian government, which had made little preparation for war, the embargo was nearly a death sentence.

By the end of 1992 Bosnian Serbs had overrun 70 per cent of the country and besieged most of the Muslim population in major cities like Sarajevo and a few rural enclaves.

Croats in western Bosnia and neighbouring Croatia, nominal allies in the government fight against Serbs, regularly blocked and pilfered illegal arms shipments bound for Sarajevo forces.

Bosnian Muslims and Croats fought their own war in central Bosnia in 1993 until the United States brokered a ceasefire in the spring of 1994 and persuaded them to form a federation.

The federation agreement opened supply routes for light arms, ammunition and anti-tank weapons into central Bosnia, where the most active battlefields lay.

Formerly rag-tag units began taking the field in full uniform with flak jackets, battle helmets, sleeping bags, spare boots, guns, ammunition and radios.

The Bosnian army ended 1994 by capturing Kupres in the centre of the country and taking key high ground known as the Cemerska Planina north of Sarajevo.

The army has used a winter truce to train and equip itself for renewed offensives when a current truce ends on May 1.

"The real limitation on our army now is the lack of heavy weapons caused by the arms embargo," said General Divjak.

"We are trying to pull ourselves out of that hole by capturing weapons and producing some. We buy a few weapons, but the embargo is the limit to our greater success."

Despite the truce, government troops have already launched offensives on Vlasic and, further east, around Tuzla.

"Bosnian army morale is excellent but the Serbs haven't really responded yet and government troops are yet to be tested in 1995," said a U.N. official who asked not to be named.

Chechens caned at first trial under Sharia law

By Isabella Astigarraga
Agence France Presse

VEDENO, Russia — The 27 men lined up on the platform in the mosque Thursday, grinning sheepishly and trying not to look at the crowd that had come to witness their trial and punishment by Chechenya's first Islamic court.

The 27 had been arrested for being drunk and disorderly in the streets of Vedeno, a hill town about 60 kilometres southeast of the Chechen capital Grozny. They knew what to expect as they eyed the canes lying on a table beside the Koran.

The "trial" was a mere formality, since the defendants were caught in the act. The presiding imam explained that under the "Islamic constitution" introduced a month ago by Chechen separatist leaders, their offence was punishable by 40 strokes of the cane.

The atmosphere was lighthearted enough as the first man came forward to take his punishment. He took off his jacket and lay down on the table face down. The "executioner" — a young man in jeans and a leather jacket — lifted the cane hesitantly, clearly reluctant to inflict the punishment on his victim.

As he wavered with arm upraised, the offender turned and told him impatiently to "get on with it." The 100 or so spectators burst out laughing.

The blows, 30 on the buttocks and 10 on the shoulders were dealt relatively lightly for the first of the condemned men. Some attempted to turn the whole exercise into a kind of sporting event by jumping briskly off the table when the punishment was over.

Gradually however the tone of the proceedings changed. The blows became harder and the atmosphere changed.

At one point, as one of the prisoners moved to the table, a man in battledress stood up at the back of the courtroom and shouted something. He walked to the front and handed over his Kalashnikov assault rifle to another soldier, then seized the cane. "It's his brother," a spectator confided.

In all, seven or eight brothers or cousins asked to mete out the punishment on their relative themselves.

Ilias, another spectator said those prisoners were "lucky" because in this close-knit community their shame is thus mitigated.

"The blows are nothing at all. The worst is the shame. It is better to be hit by a member of the family," Ilias said.

Most of the prisoners took their punishment without flinching. One even offered to take a double dose, in place of a man who he said was sick.

But as they filed out of the courtroom, all the men averted their gaze and the spectators looked away in embarrassment.

Of the 27, only one man protested the punishment. "I am 65 and all my life I have never done a wrong thing to anyone. You are youngsters, you owe me respect," he yelled at the imam and the young men trying to restrain him.

Finally, two of his nephews managed to put him on the table and held him down while the cane was applied.

There was strong support for this new form of justice among the spectators in the court and the people of Vedeno, where the separatists have set up their new headquarters.

But many were keen to stress that Chechenya was not about to become a Caucasian Saudi Arabia. "We don't want to stop people drinking, we just want to punish those who get drunk in the streets every night and who shame everyone and molest the women," said Sultan, 30.

He himself readily admitted drinking a glass of alcohol from time to time "but not in public."

There were people in Vedeno who wanted to apply the Sharia in all its rigour, notably for criminals. They recalled wistfully the Soviet era when, as one noted, "you could walk about at night and there were no thieves."

The majority however said Islamic law was not part of tradition in Chechenya where the people practise Sufism, form of Islam.

As to the 27 caned on Thursday, Sultan said it was unlikely they would become teetotallers as a result. He said they would "certainly not be deterred from drinking. Only now they'll be more careful not to get caught."

Former communists make comeback in Eastern Europe

By Mark J. Porubcansky
The Associated Press

KOSICE, Slovakia — Frustrated by bad roads, rickety buses, polluting factories and other urban woes, voters in Slovakia's second-largest city looked for a mayor with experience. They choose a former communist.

The political comeback last fall of Rudolf Schuster, who ran this city of 250,000 people during the 1980s before the collapse of communism, is far from unique.

Five years ago, millions of average people throughout the Soviet bloc rose up to junk a system foundering on mediocrity. Now, they are using their freedom to invite back the only people with real governing experience.

Today, one-time communists voice support for political pluralism and market economics. Pragmatists like Mr. Schuster, who accepted communism less out of ideological conviction than from a lack of alternatives, find the adjustment easiest.

But some retain old habits and a constituency that remains focused on social equality. It is unclear whether they can apply yesterday's experience to today's problems.

Reformed communist parties have won majorities in Hungary, Bulgaria and Lithuania. One-time apparatchiks are entrenched to varying degrees in Romania, Moldova, Slovakia, Poland and Latvia and all of the former Yugoslav republics. Former low-level communists fared well in Estonia's election March 5.

Only in the Czech Republic, the westernmost state of the former Marxist world, and Albania on the southern fringe, are communists definitely out. And in Albania, President Sali Berisha's ruling Democratic Party is accused by opponents of trampling democratic principles.

But this is also a story of democracy at work. Voters confronted with squabbling politicians, unemployment, large discrepancies in wealth and rapidly rising prices, sought experience.

Enter Mr. Schuster.

As mayor during the '80s, Mr. Schuster started rebuilding Kosice's old town. People remember that he got things done. When the post-communist mayor struggled, Mr. Schuster was reelected to tackle a familiar list of urban problems.

He said a polluting magnesium factory must be closed, two-thirds of the buses should be replaced and a highway bypass built. But he knows money is short and he must produce in order to be reelected.

"There is no time for theoretical problems," Mr. Schuster said. "Now is the time for practical, market economics."

"I wasn't a good communist," he said. "But I was a member of the party, because otherwise I couldn't do my job."

Mr. Schuster was a bad enough communist to be named chairman of Slovakia's first post-Marxist regional parliament and the Czechoslovak ambasador to Canada before the federation split into two countries in 1993.

Even in the era of stifling communist bureaucracy, he had a reputation as a man with the common touch. His time in Canada reinforced his appreciation for practical local politics, he said.

Few people in Eastern Europe would go back to the strictures of communism, so why reelect the people who enforced them? Some say former communists are among the most able managers.

"These are ambitious, smart people whose only chance to excel in those times was as communist party leaders," said 60-year-old Nadezhda Bespalova in Moldova, a former Soviet republic.

Ladislav Falat, who ran Mr. Schuster's comeback campaign and now is an official with Slovakia's anti-monopoly agency, said whatever its faults, the communist system trained party members as administrators.

"Those who were not in the party are like athletes who were never trained," he said.

Elsewhere in the region, voters have turned to former communists to escape nationalism or political bickering, or to east the pain of economic transition.

Once in power, the former communists must juggle demands for a social safety net and the need to pursue tight money and tough reform.

Hungary's Socialist Party, renamed former communists, swept to power last year behind Gyula Horn, the foreign minister who opened the iron curtain in 1989.

Voters looked to the socialists to end the drift of an inexperienced centre-right government. But they are saddled with political squabbles and an economic mess. Respected Finance Minister Laszlo Bekesi quit in January in a dispute with Mr. Horn about the pace of reform. Mr. Bekesi wanted to go fast; Mr. Horn was concerned about protecting a loyal constituentency.

Bulgaria's 35-year-old socialist Prime Minister, Zhan Videnov, was elected in December to end five years of parliamentary gridlock, but faces similar challenges.

Ognyan Minchev, a political analyst in Bulgaria, predicts Mr. Videnov will struggle with old-style communist thinking in the party's rank and file.

In some places, the old Marxists never left. Romanian President Ion Iliescu, a former communist minister, took power after Nicolae Ceausescu was deposed and has shielded Romanians from extensive market reforms. Romanians elected him in 1990 and 1992, and polls suggest he would win again in 1996.

PNA, Hamas meet on attacks

(Continued from page 1)

as they want through peaceful, democratic means, but not through the use of violence."

PLO officials and members of Islamic Jihad said they, too, were in contact on the same issue.

A leading Hamas figure said last week that Hamas would consider suspending attacks in and from self-rule areas if the PNA ensured it was part of what he called "the decision-making process."

Hamas spokesman Mahmoud Al Zahar told the newspaper Al Quds that any decision to halt attacks would have to come from the Hamas military wing, Izzeddin Al Qassam.

Dr. Zahar could not be reached for comment, but one PLO official interpreted this as a "positive development because it did not mean he totally rejected halting attacks."

In Gaza a military court sentenced a Hamas supporter to seven years in jail after convicting him of helping transport explosives to Israel, Palestinian Prosecutor General Khaled Al Kidra said on Monday.

Mohammad Al Simri, 29, was the third Hamas man sent to jail in two days by the PNA.

The authority has also jailed three men from Islamic Jihad, one of them for life.

Palestinian sources said Simri was detained last month apparently on a tip from Israel that he helped Hamas smuggle a truck laden with explosives into Israel.

PNA accuses Israel of killing

(Continued from page 1)

began beating about 20 of them with gun butts and sticks. Soldiers dragged several women by the hair.

The incident led to stone throwing by Palestinian youths but soldiers held their fire. There were no injuries in the incident.

Soldiers detained at least 13 people, including some prominent leaders of Mr. Arafat's Fateh movement in Ramallah, witnesses said.

Yen as key world currency faces many obstacles

TOKYO (AFP) — Japan's desire to bolster the yen as a key world currency faces many obstacles, including the huge yen debt held by many Asian nations and the U.S. dollar's entrenched position in world trade, analysts said Monday.

"Malaysia, for example, has a huge yen debt. The last thing I think they want to do is take on more yen," said Betsy Daniels, a banking analyst with Morgan Stanley in Tokyo.

The yen has risen 17 per cent in value against the dollar since the beginning of the year, increasing the costs of repayment for Asian countries who hold loans from Japanese banks.

Since many of these countries use dollars in their international trade, such as China, Thailand and Indonesia, this raises their repayment costs.

The Japanese government has so far said it will do nothing to ease Asian countries' debt burden, which has reached more than $6 billion.

Tokyo has raised the idea of bolstering the yen as a key world currency to match the country's economic ascension and counter the effects of the falling dollar, which has dramatically boosted the price of Japanese exports.

Takafumi Kaneko, a deputy director of Japan's Economic Planning Agency, said Friday that Japan wanted to develop "intimate relations with Asian central banks" to develop the yen as a key international currency.

He cited U.S. economic decline and the lack of support for the dollar as a major reason.

This presumably means Japan would like more Asian central banks to hold their current accounts in yen and for business transactions to be conducted in yen.

But Dick Beason, an economist with James Capel in Tokyo, said this all points to maintaining the yen as a strong currency, which is not the effect that the Japanese government should be striving for at this time."

"I don't think this has been very well thought out," Mr. Beason said. "This is not the policy the Japanese government should be pursuing now."

For the yen to take on the stature of a key trading currency, Asian countries have to be able to sell more of their products in Japan, which would in turn put more yen in their pockets, Ms. Daniels said.

She said one reason the dollar dominated is that the United States represented one of the biggest markets for developing Asian countries, which was not the case with Japan.

"Japan has to open its doors to imports so these countries can earn the yen to repay their debts," Ms. Daniels said.

Malaysia and Thailand conduct about 40 per cent of their trade with Japan, but only about 20 per cent of their currency reserves are in yen, she said. Much of their currency reserves remain in dollars.

"The dollar is still far more comfortably accepted," said Mark Faulkner, an analyst with S.G. Warburg securities. "The yen is really not in a position to take over the dollar's position, not even in its own backyard."

Another reason the dollar is so entrenched in Asia is that the currencies in Hong Kong, Malaysia and Thailand, among others, are linked to the greenback in one way or another.

The analysts agree that the dollar may eventually be knocked off its throne; but it will require some major restructuring of the way international business is conducted.

The dollar remains the foremost currency for the buying and selling of petroleum, which Ms. Betsy says "is what greases the wheels of the world economy."

What may happen is that certain currencies may dominate in regions of the world, as is the case with the German mark in Europe, particular in former communist block nations, where the dollar has become the currency of second choice.

"In the next five years, we should start seeing a more strongly entrenched yen-trading bloc," Ms. Betsy said. "We do expect greater imports from Japan."

Meanwhile, traders turned their backs on a plan to stimulate the Japanese economy, and reacted to inaction at a meeting of finance ministers in Bali, by driving the dollar down Monday and warning it could go farther.

Dealers reported "heavy" intervention to support the dollar by the Bank of Japan, a day after Japan and the United States had been unable to announce concrete steps to stabilise foreign exchange rates during talks at a meeting of Asia Pacific Economic Cooperation (APEC) finance ministers in Bali.

Japanese officials asked the markets for patience to let the package of "emergency economic measures," unveiled Friday to counter the rise of the yen, take effect.

"At the moment, the market is giving low marks to it. But when supplementary budget and import-promoting tax measures take shape, the market's recognition will change," Japanese Finance Minister Masayoshi Takemura was quoted by Jiji Press as saying in Bali Monday.

The U.S. currency fell against the yen despite a decision by the Bank of Japan to cut its discount rate from 1.75 per cent to 0.75 per cent on Friday, dealers said.

The dollar was quoted at 82.15-20 yen in evening trading on the Tokyo foreign exchange market, down from the previous business day's 82.32-34 yen here.

"As expected, (Friday's economic) package had nothing new," a chief dealer with a Japanese city bank said. "The outcome of the APEC forum at the weekend seems to be the factor that pushed the yen up again."

Dealers warned that the U.S. currency might break a record low price of 80.15 yen, marked last week because there were few factors to support the dollar in the short term.

"It is no wonder that the dollar falls below 80 yen sometimes this week," Hijiri Fujiwara, a dealer at Daiwa Bank Ltd., said. "The dollar may touch 79 yen or even 78 yen if selling pressure surges to a considerable point."

Dealers also said the discount rate cut to a record low of one per cent did not appear to affect the market because the cut of 0.75 percentage point was within expectations.

"If the Bank of Japan lowered interest rates by one percentage point instead of 0.75 percentage point, the yen might have been lower (against the dollar)," another dealer said.

Prime Minister Tomiichi Murayama, brushing aside fears of a further surge in the Japanese currency, said his government was ready to do everything possible to stem the rising yen.

"As for Japan, we will take all kinds of measures to stabilise the international currency market, while taking a coordinated global action," Mr. Murayama said.

"I believe (the United States) will reveal steps shortly (to defend the dollar)," Mr. Murayama said, adding that Tokyo and Washington "have confirmed the need to stabilise exchange rates."

Chief cabinet secretary Kozo Igarashi, speaking at a news conference here, said Monday that Japan and the United States had "agreed to take timely and appropriate action in the market," to counter the rise of the yen.

Mr. Igarashi stressed that Japan was committed to implement faithfully the economic package announced Friday.

"It is most important that we implement the latest package," Mr. Igarashi said.

Share prices rose Monday on bargain-hunting and futures-led buying, although market players were disappointed at the package, brokers said.

"The government package announced last Friday didn't meet market expectations," a Japanese broker said, adding that most players said the impact of the measures was "extremely" limited.

The Nikkei stock average of 225 issues rose by 256.26 points to close at 16,304.15 points following a 2.4 per cent, or 390.9-point, decline on Friday. Turnover dropped from Friday's 314.68 million shares to an estimated 180 million.

Investors believed that the yen could begin another surge as soon as markets in Europe and the United States opened after the Easter holiday, traders added.

IFO: Yen to maintain strength in medium term

MUNICH (AFP) — The yen is to maintain its strong position over the medium term, particularly against the dollar, and this will have a profound effect on the Japanese economy, the Munich-based IFO institute said in a report published here Tuesday.

The institute forecast lower growth for Japan, whose GDP rose 0.6 per cent last year over 1993, calculating the rate would slide 0.5 percentage points for every 10 yen the currency was overvalued against the ailing dollar.

It added that Japanese industry had reacted to lower competitiveness resulting from the strength of the yen by transferring some production to neighbouring Asian states "where salaries are lower."

IFO estimates the high costs associated with German industry, which had cost it its competitive edge last year, had now "almost entirely disappeared," considerably boosting German exporters' chances in Japan.

The institute added that because of the yen's overevaluation, conditions for German firms looking to move into Japan have become much improved. It said medium-sized firms should seize the moment to develop links with Japanese partners.

IFO researchers added that the Japanese economy now found itself in a structural crisis as it struggled to overcome the deepest and longest recession since the war and identified political change and deregulation as necessary to effect a turnaround.

But they warned it was too early to speak of the "end of the Japanese era" as the Japanese were likely to be able to react flexibly to the new situation.

Arab overseas funds put at over $900b

ABU DHABI (AFP) — Arab states have more than $900 billion investments abroad, nearly half of which are owned by governments, a United Arab Emirates (UAE) study said Monday.

Most of the assets are based in the United States and Europe and around $400 billion belong to governments, according to the study by Hassan Al Numan, chairman of the Federation of UAE Chambers of Commerce and Industry.

The Arab private sector controls around $220 billion while the rest are invested by banks in deposits, he said.

Mr. Numan gave no further details of those funds but bank estimates showed more than $400 billion of the Arab overseas assets are owned by Saudi Arabia and its five partners in the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC).

Most of the GCC funds are based in the U.S. and the European Union and invested in stocks, real estate and bank deposits.

Studies show major U.S. class divisions

NEW YORK (R) — Economic class differences in the United States are more pronounced than in any other industrialised nation, the New York Times reported Monday.

Citing economic and statistical research yet to be published, the Times reported that in 1989, last year for which statistics were available, the wealthiest one per cent of American households — with assets worth $2.3 million — owns "nearly 40 per cent of the nation's wealth."

The top 20 per cent of households, with assets of $180,000 or more, owns 80 per cent of America's wealth, the newspaper said.

In contrast, the richest one per cent of the British population owns about 18 per cent of the wealth.

On the lower end of the scale, the studies showed the lowest earing 20 per cent of households earn 5.7 per cent of America's after-tax income.

In Finland, the lowest 20 per cent earns 10.8 per cent of after-tax income.

In terms of income, the top 20 per cent of American households earn $55,000 or more and bring in 55 per cent of the after-tax income, the paper reported.

The author of two of the studies on wealth in Western countries is New York University Professor Edward Wolff, an economist who is to publish the papers in the next few months, the newspaper reported.

"We are the most unequal industrialised country in terms of income and wealth, and we're growing more unequal faster than the other industrialised countries," Dr. Wolff told the Times.

"It tilts the political system toward those who have more resources," Margaret Weir of the Brookings Institution was quoted as saying.

Another scholar preparing studies for publication is Timothy Smeeding, director of the Luxembourg income study project.

Economic change leaves Russians below poverty line

MOSCOW (R) — Russia's rush to a market economy has brought colour to Moscow's shops and new cars to the streets, but millions of people live below the poverty line, their jobs and livelihoods at risk from economic change.

The head of the All-Russian Centre for Living Standards, an institute linked to the Labour Ministry, said Monday that 30 to 40 per cent of Russians earned less than the 249,000 ($50) a month viewed as the minimum subsistence level.

"Thirty to 40 per cent of the population live below the poverty line," Vyacheslav Bobkov said by telephone.

But building a social safety net to help pensioners and the unemployed is low on the list of Russian priorities right now.

Ministers have plumped instead to stretch their budget funding a costly military campaign to crush breakaway Chechenya's independence bid. Poverty in Russia, the subject of a World Bank report to be released next month, is unlikely to go away.

"Poverty is something we are very concerned about, and so is the Russian government, possibly because it is an election year," said Hasso Molineus, operations manager at the World Bank's Moscow office.

"I think there is a realisation that the cost of transition is substantial. In the short to medium term, more and more people are going to become poor," he added.

World Bank figures show that Russia spends about 12.4 per cent of gross domestic product (GDP) on social security, although other Western economists put the figure at much more than that.

To fund a better system of social protection would take 14.9 per cent of GDP, the organisation says. "These are figures which are financeable, and it is definitely something the government should be considering," Mr. Molineus said.

He said cash could come from redirecting subsidies, redistributing budgeted funds and raising retirement ages from the 50, 55 or 60 currently seen in Russia. "Low retirement ages like these are something a country like Russia can ill afford."

He said World Bank loans might help fund social security while Russia completed the transition from communism to capitalism, but Mr. Bobkov said he knew little of such plans.

"We prefer to rely on our own resources to solve the problem," he said.

Russia already has a social safety net inherited from a Soviet system which recognised the existence of neither inflation nor unemployment. It is struggling to cope.

Benefits, including homes, kindergartens and clinics, are frequently funded by firms rather than by the state. Other programmes may not reach the people who need them most.

Life below the poverty line may mean surviving on a pension under $9 a month — the new minimum approved by the State Duma parliament last week. A loaf of bread costs 20 cents.

Unemployment — two million in a workforce of 70 million — is still low by Western standards, but official data hide short-time working and temporary layoffs at firms fighting to survive.

"People were looked after by their company, and they were not fired even when the company ran into trouble," said one Western economist.

"But that is destructive as well. Firms keep people on rather than letting them go because they know there is no independent alternative."

HOROSCOPE

FORECAST FOR TUESDAY APRIL 18, 1995

By Thomas S. Pierson, Astrologer, Carroll Righter Foundation

ARIES: (March 21 to April 19) Look to good pals in the morning for ideas which will help you to advance in your career, then later complete dull routines.

TAURUS: (April 20 to May 20) Get outside ventures built up even if it means investing a little more money. This is a good day to try to gain personal goals.

GEMINI: (May 21 to June 21) This morning is the best time to extend your enterprises and later tonight avoid anything which can spoil your name.

MOON CHILDREN: (June 22 to July 21) Seek for a clever way to improve your interests and tonight steer clear one who is unpredictable and could cause problems.

LEO: (July 22 to August 21) A partner may comprehend some point you come up with and will help you put it across to a bigwig today.

VIRGO: (August 22 to September 22) Put those new ideas to work and you can handle a fellow associate much better, then later today you can be charming towards those around.

LIBRA: (September 23 to October 22) This morning is fine for working on your finest talent, and be certain to handle any tasks ahead of you conscientiously.

SCORPIO: (October 23 to November 21) Get your abode running smoothly in the morning, but later don't take on any more expense than you can easily afford.

SAGITTARIUS: (November 22 to December 21) It is wise to get important matters attended to in the morning, and then give more attention to you home and family members.

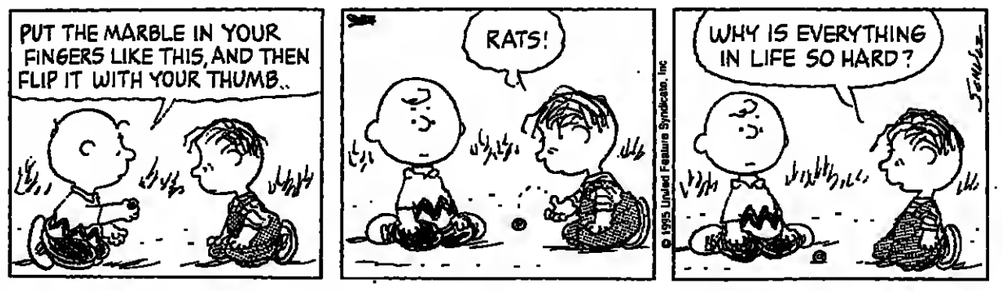
CAPRICORN: (December 22 to January 20) In the morning today, you know how to make better use of assets and thereby gain more, but later tonight use tact with everyone around you.

AQUARIUS: (January 21 to February 19) Be on the alert to gain some cherished wish but don't make changes today where money affairs are concerned or you get into trouble.

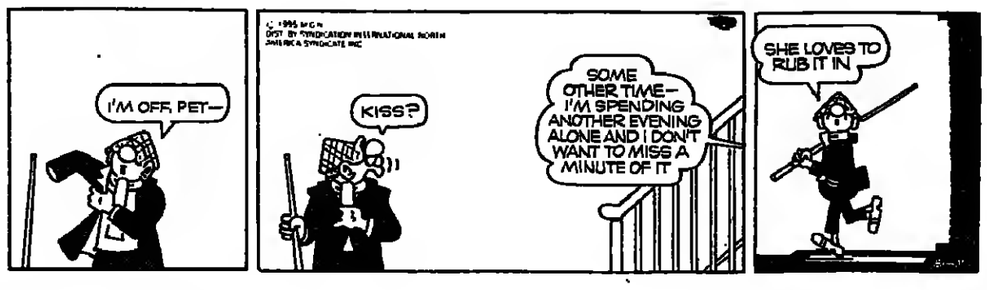
PISCES: (February 20 to March 20) Find a better method of gaining your personal aims and latter don't use forceful methods with others or there could be problems.

Birthstone of April: Diamond — Amethyst

Peanuts



Andy Capp



Mutt'n'Jeff

THE BETTER HALF

By Glasbergen

"Stanley, that was a great kiss! Where did you learn to triple-pucker?"

JUMBLE

THAT SCRAMBLED WORD GAME by Henri Arnold and Mike Argirion

Unscramble these four Jumbles, one letter to each square, to form four ordinary words.

BATOB

OEPLE

GARAVE

RUJITS

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Now arrange the circled letters to form the surprise answer, as suggested by the above cartoon.

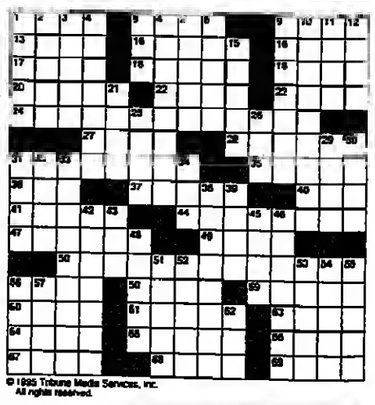
Print answer here: HIS

(Answers tomorrow)

Saturday's Jumbles: STOIC EPOCH UPLIFT OBLONG

Answer: What hubby got on his day off — A "CHOPPING" LIST

THE Daily Crossword by Stanley B. Whitten



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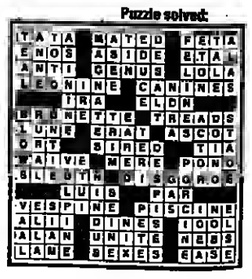
ACROSS
1 Carp's kin
5 Type of dive
9 Foundation
13 Mideast sultanate
14 Detection device
16 Geraint's wife
17 Shredded
18 "—Seeing You"
19 Farm measure
20 Small groups
22 Person of great eminence
23 Afterward
24 Flintstone's cry
27 Secret hideaway
28 Mediterranean tree
31 Recreation place
35 Barrel part
36 Lawyers' gp.
37 Paris and Bonheur
40 Obtain
41 Baby carriage
44 Unexpected successes
47 Looks fixedly
49 Letterman's competition
50 Song from a Disney movie
56 Moved smoothly
58 — Tyler Moore
59 British county
60 Water lily site
61 Sweeper
63 Soft cheese
64 Cain's victim
65 Fable writer
66 Old
67 Proboscis
68 Agents, briefly
69 Dame Myra —

DOWN
1 Eccentric
2 Jewish scholar
3 South American Indian
4 Exalt
5 — Lanka
6 Aussie leaper
7 Improvise
8 Wealthy VIP
9 Defeat
10 Alaskan city
11 Father
12 Biblical garden
15 Of the kidneys
21 Moselle feeder
25 Fashion name
26 Certain prosecutors, initially
29 At all times
30 Permits
31 Chats idly
32 Border on
33 "Life" and "Time"
34 Author's works: abbr.
38 Cartoon character
39 Acorn, e.g.
42 Frying pan
43 Informal affirmative
45 Slaughter of baseball
46 Pompous bureaucrat
48 Ballroom dance
51 Challenger
52 Unevenly notched
53 Threnody
54 Zodiac sign
55 Listens to
56 Bridge measure
57 Timber wolf
62 Some cops: abbr.

Puzzle solved:



JEA privatisation to cover entire electricity sector

By a Jordan Times Staff Reporter

AMMAN — The Jordan Electricity Authority (JEA), which now operates as a state-owned semi-autonomous entity, is expected to be turned into a commercial entity registered under the companies law ahead of privatisation in about two years time.

The government has sent a draft law on the electricity sector to parliament for debate and approval during an extraordinary session which is expected to start in June.

The draft legislation changing the status of the JEA is necessary because the authority itself was created under a special law.

Energy and Mineral Resources Minister Samih Darwazeh was quoted as saying in the local press that the draft law includes provisions to license private sector firms in the electricity sector.

The draft law empowers the Ministry of Energy and Mineral Resources to retain its regulatory control over the electricity sector.

The main safety valve for customers against high charges is expected to be a condition that all power utilities abide by a ceiling set by the authorities. Opening the door for private sector participation in the electricity sector followed a 10 per cent increase in consumption in 1994 over 1993.

The draft law also provides for an increase in the earnings of the JEA staff, Mr. Darwazeh said.

The mechanism and modalities for privatising the JEA were contained in study prepared by Britain's Ernst and Young consultants, which undertook the task on the second half of 1994 after the cabinet decided in principle to privatise the JEA.

The first stage in privatisation is commercialisation of the entity; the second stage involves placing shares on subscription to the public.

It was not immediately known whether the government — which will continue to own the authority regardless of its registration as a commercial firm — intended to use any of its investment arms to retain control of the power utility when it goes for offering to the public.

The expected capital of the proposed company was not immediately known. However, officials noted that it was up to the Council of Ministers to consider the study and recommendations prepared by Ernst & Young and decide on a capital for the entity.

The assets of the JEA is estimated at around JD 400 million; the authority, which accounts for more than 90 per cent of all electricity produced in the Kingdom, has an accumulated loss about JD 20 million.

The losses were mainly attributed to non-payment of dues by government departments and JEA-generated power being used for state purposes as well as for pumping water and in support services for the agriculture and water sector.

However, the authority broke even in its operations during 1994.

The JEA is the second major government-owned utility that the government has said would be privatised. The Telecommunications Corporation (TCC) holds a monopoly in basic telephone services in Jordan.

The TCC privatisation also involves commercialisation of its operations before inviting private sector participation in its equity.

UAE denies 'black cloud of debt' looms over banks

DUBAI (R) — The United Arab Emirates (UAE) central bank said Monday that UAE banks had made adequate provisions against bad debts in recent years to recover from a period in the 1980s when a lending spree forced some banks to merge.

"There is no black cloud of debt looming over the UAE banking system," a central bank official said. "That is simply not true."

Referring to a report at a recent seminar which said bad debts were 25.7 billion dirhams ($7 billion) in 1994, the central bank said in a statement that this figure was historical and related to a situation 10 years ago.

The report by Ali Mayhid, deputy head of the Emirates Banking Training Institute, saying bad debt was 17.5 billion ($4.8 billion) by 1988 and one billion dirhams ($270 million) in 1980 was published in UAE newspapers and quoted by Reuters.

"...All banks had suspended interest relating to those loans and made sufficient provisions against any possible losses, therefore this problem does not exist at the moment," the central bank statement sent to Reuters said.

Mr. Mayhid was quoted by local dailies on Thursday as telling the seminar bad debts in 1994 accounted for 28 per cent of total bank loans of 91.4 billion dirhams ($25 billion).

The central bank official told Reuters the figure reflected bad debts incurred by UAE banks "at one time or another" which had been accounted for, and did not indicate outstanding debts.

"If you go back to add them all up without taking stock of the provisions or settlements of course you will get a huge number. The last bad wave we had was ten years ago," he said.

"Banks are collecting or providing for it in their profit and loss statements," he said. "It shows what the cyclical problem has been and how banks made bad loans in the past."

The central bank has taken measures to control lending which went out of control in the oil boom of the early 1980s. Some banks incurred huge losses and had to merge.

It introduced new rules in 1994 which said a bank could not lend more than seven per cent of its capital to a single private institution or borrower.

Lending to the private sector accounted for about 80 per cent of the 81.6 billion dirhams ($22.2 billion) in domestic credits extended by banks in the UAE at the end of September 1994. It was clear how much of that was to individuals.

Business Daily Beat

A review of economic news from the Arabic press

Number of job-seekers hit 111,000

☆☆ THE TOTAL of all job-seekers in the Kingdom is 111,000, including 62,000 females. The largest percentage is in Amman Governorate where job-seekers account for 30 per cent, followed by Irbid at 18 per cent.

The lowest percentage of 1.4 per cent is in Aqaba. Sixty per cent of job-seekers hold diplomas from community colleges whereas the number of university graduates does not exceed 3,200. The figures were given by the president of the Civil Services Commission who pointed out that 4,300 jobs will be filled this year.

Ministries and government departments will take 2,500 persons while other public institutions will take 500. The remaining 1,000 will fill vacancies from the previous year (Al Dustour).

☆☆ HIGH OFFICIAL sources said that the proposed amendments to the Income Tax Law include exempting dividends from shares and capital gains from income tax and continuing the exemption given to the agricultural sector and Jordanian exports. Details of the principles to be adopted for amending the income tax law will be made public through the media soon, the sources said (Al Aswaq).

☆☆ RELIABLE SOURCES said the Ministry of Supply is about to allow the private sector to import lentil beans after having allowed them to import split lentils in the past (Al Aswaq).

☆☆ THE GENERAL manager of the Arab White Cement Manufacturing denied there was any shortage of white cement in the market and emphasised that the company provides sufficient amounts to the Jordanian market which gets 50,000 tonnes each year.

The company supplies Syria with 40,000 tonnes a year. The general manager said the company was ready to deliver the white cement directly to the beneficiaries from the factory at JD 78 per tonne (Al Aswaq).

☆☆ THE JORDAN French Insurance Company posted a JD 1.1 million net profit last year, representing 50 per cent of the company's capital and 45.4 per cent above the net profit of 1993. As such, the board of directors is recommending the distribution of JD 484,000 in dividends at a rate of 22 per cent. The 1994 annual report of the company shows that assets rose by 9.6 per cent to JD 8.8 million and shareholders' equity increased by nine per cent to JD 2.06 million. The life insurance department generated a net proft of JD 41,700, the transport department generated JD 127,700 and the general accidents department JD 13,200 net profit.

"Outside agencies" brought in JD 476,000 and the vehicles department JD 15,100 net profit after posting a JD 135,300 loss in 1993. Overall, the company made a JD 955,300 net profit from insurance operations in 1994 compared to JD 710,600 in 1993 (Al Aswaq).

☆☆ THE JORDAN National Shipping Lines Company registered a JD 3.59 million gross profit last year, 242 per cent higher than the 1993 profit. Total earnings amounted to JD11.85 million while operational, administrative and general expenses totalled JD 8.37 million. Shareholders' equity increased from JD 11.1 million to JD 13.1 million while total assets amounted to JD 17.33 million at the end of 1994. The board of directors is recommending the distribution of dividends at a rate of 20 per cent. The company's annual report indicated that due to low volume of goods destined to Aqaba, the route from northern Europe to Aqaba had to be changed to pass through other ports on the Red Sea and the Arab Gulf (Al Aswaq).

AMMAN FINANCIAL MARKET

HOUSING BANK CENTER AMMAN - SHMEISANI
TELEPHONE: 660170 / 663170
ORGANIZED MARKET SHARE PRICE LIST FOR MONDAY 17/04/1995

COMPANY'S NAME	NO. OF SHARES TRADED	VALUE TRADED JD	PREV. CLOSING PRICE	CLOSING PRICE
ARAB BANK Plc	540	104220	193.000	193.000
JORDAN NATIONAL BANK	31630	152370	4.740	4.860
JORDAN NATIONAL BANK / NEW	5820	26905	4.620	4.660
BANK OF JORDAN	100	382	3.740	3.820
MIDDLE EAST INVESTMENT BANK.	5350	8661	1.630	1.580
INDUSTRIAL DEVELOPMENT BANK	6250	17925	2.820	2.870
THE HOUSING BANK	35700	281591	7.800	7.900
JORDAN KUWAIT BANK	1386	4032	2.930	2.920
JORDAN GULF BANK	69250	99145	1.390	1.450
JORDAN ISLAMIC BANK	113582	462409	3.920	4.060
BUSINESS BANK	6450	23304	3.520	3.630
JORDAN INVESTMENT & FINANCE BANK	3555	15051	4.150	4.360
BEIT ELMAL SAVING&INVESTMENT FOR HOUSING	1550	5107	3.210	3.310
AMMAN BANK FOR INVESTMENT	207250	281118	1.300	1.370
ARAB BANKING CORPORATION/JORDAN	230	935	4.000	4.080
PHILADELPHIA INVESTMENT BANK.	262206	531513	1.950	2.040
BANKS SECTOR	750849	2014665	INDEX NUMBER: 169.33	CHANGE : +0.77%
JORDAN FRENCH INSURANCE	18000	49512	2.760	2.740
ARAB LIFE & ACCIDENT INSURANCE	4000	10600	2.650	2.650
INSURANCE SECTOR	22000	60112	INDEX NUMBER: 136.04	CHANGE : -0.09%
JORDANIAN ELECTRIC POWER	10020	16532	1.650	1.650
JORDANIAN ELECTRIC POWER /NEW	31450	49062	1.570	1.560
JORDAN HOTEL & TOURISM	98707	709443	7.200	7.100
IRBID DISTRICT ELECTRICITY	200	240	1.140	1.200
JORDAN HIMMEH MINERAL	200	522	2.610	2.610
ARAB INTERNATIONAL HOTELS	9750	68250	7.150	7.000
JORDAN NATIONAL SHIPPING LINES	57100	190942	3.240	3.360
NATIONAL PORTFOLIO SECURITIES	13600	33629	2.380	2.480
JORDAN PRESS FOUNDATION / ALRA'I	650	6695	10.400	10.300
UNITED MIDDLE EAST & COMMODORE HOTELS	3550	9639	2.730	2.700
ARAB INTER. FOR INVESTMENT & EDUCATION	3400	11420	3.360	3.360
SERVICES SECTOR	228749	1097045	INDEX NUMBER: 142.89	CHANGE : -0.20%
ATTANQEEP CONST. MATERIAL MANUFACTURING	800	902	1.150	1.140
THE JORDAN CEMENT FACTORIES	18596	57303	3.080	3.090
JORDAN PHOSPHATE MINES	10650	27599	2.550	2.620
THE ARAB POTASH/NEW	800	4103	5.000	5.250
JORDAN PETROLEUM REFINARY	2602	24463	9.340	9.380
THE INDUSTRIAL COMMERCIAL & AGRICULTURAL	183	657	3.610	3.610
THE JORDAN WORSTED MILLS	600	4995	8.300	8.350
ARAB PHARMACEUTICAL MANUFACTURING	10504	43376	4.110	4.140
JORDAN PRINTING & PACKING	312	1560	5.000	5.000
THE JORDAN PIPES MANUFACTURING	1466	3972	2.700	2.710
THE PUBLIC MINING .	750	2198	2.850	2.930
SPINNING & WEAVING	2770	7371	2.670	2.630
RAFIA INDUSTRIES	500	1250	2.490	2.500
DAR AL DAWA DEVELOPMENT & INVESTMENT	4700	37446	7.980	7.950
ARAB INVESTMENT & INTERNATIONAL TRADE	50150	46956	.910	.950
ARAB ALUMINIUM INDUSTRY	2600	18697	7.200	7.170
LIVESTOCK & POULTRY	26850	18232	.660	.680
ARAB PAPER CONVERTING & TRADING	11600	18575	1.600	1.600
INTERMEDIATE PETRO-CHEMICAL INDUSTRIES	23350	66373	2.750	2.890
JORDAN ROCKWOOL INDUSTRIES	2750	3250	1.200	1.190
ALADDIN INDUSTRIES	733	3116	4.350	4.250
JORDAN INDUSTRIES & MATCH/JIMCO	1000	690	.690	.690
NATIONAL CABLE & WIRE MANUFACTURING	500	2375	4.750	4.750
JORDAN SULPHO-CHEMICALS	1300	2278	1.680	1.760
ARAB CENTER FOR PHARM. & CHEMICALS	4250	10079	2.330	2.370
KAWTHER INVESTMENT	1200	1929	1.650	1.650
UNIVERSAL MODERN INDUSTRIES	4950	17607	3.530	3.590
JORDAN INDUSTRIAL RESOURCES CO.	3500	6970	2.000	2.000
INDUSTRIAL SECTOR	190022	434532	INDEX NUMBER: 122.35	CHANGE : +0.76%
GRAND TOTAL	1191620	3606354	INDEX NUMBER: 148.11	CHANGE : +0.66%

NO. OF TRADED SHARES IN PARALLEL MARKET : 214274
VALUE TRADED IN PARALLEL MARKET : 298948

Financial Markets

Jordan Times in co-operation with Cairo Amman Bank

U.S. Dollar in International Markets

Currency	New York Close Date 13/4/95	Tokyo Close Date 17/4/95
Sterling Pound*	1.6100	1.6120
Deutsche Mark	1.3865	1.3835
Swiss Franc	1.1450	1.1450
French Franc	4.8400	4.8375
Japanese Yen	83.55	82.18
European Currency Unit	1.3243	1.3300

* USD Per STG
** European Opening @ 9:00 a.m. GMT

Eurocurrency Interest Rates Date: 17/4/1995

Currency	1 MTH	3 MTHS	6 MTHS	12 MTHS
U.S. Dollar	5.81	6.00	6.12	6.31
Sterling Pound	6.00	6.31	6.68	7.18
Deutsche Mark	4.31	4.37	4.50	4.75
Swiss Franc	3.18	3.18	3.25	3.43
French Franc	7.62	7.43	7.00	6.68
Japanese Yen	1.31	1.31	1.31	1.31
European Currency Unit	6.06	6.18	6.25	6.50

Interbank bid rates for amounts exceeding U.S. Dollars 1,000,000 or equivalent.

Precious Metals Date: 17/4/1995

Metal	USD/Oz	JD/Gm*	Metal	USD/Oz	JD/Gm
Gold	391.50	7.30	Silver	5.55	0.100

* 21 Karat

Central Bank of Jordan Exchange Rate Bulletin Date: 17/4/1995

Currency	Bid	Offer
U.S. Dollar	0.6840	0.6860
Sterling Pound	1.0998	1.1053
Deutsche Mark	0.4938	0.4963
Swiss Franc	0.5970	0.6000
French Franc	0.1413	0.1420
Japanese Yen*	0.8353	0.8375
Dutch Guilder	0.4410	0.4432
Swedish Krona	*******	*******
Italian Lira*	0.0402	0.0404
Belgian Franc	******	*******

* Per 100

Other Currencies Date: 17/4/1995

Currency	Bid	Offer
Bahraini Dinar	1.7980	1.8150
Lebanese Lira*	0.04132	0.04240
Saudi Riyal	0.1821	0.1835
Kuwaiti Dinar	2.3180	2.3610
Qatari Riyal	0.1867	0.1879
Egyptian Pound	0.1980	0.2880
Omani Riyal	1.7610	1.7800
UAE Dirham	0.1857	0.1866
Greek Drachma*	0.1990	0.3300
Cypriot Pound	1.4675	1.5600

* Per 100

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Seven foot one inch centre Dikembe Mutombo of the Denver Nuggets look to pass the ball to teammate Rodney Rogers as Eddie Jones of the Los Angeles Lakers reachers for the ball during their NBA game (AFP photo)

Hawks nip Hornets 94-93 on last-second shot

CHARLOTTE, North Carolina (AP) — Grant Long got a layup with three-tenths of a second left Sunday, giving the Atlanta Hawks a 94-93 National Basketball Association victory over the Charlotte Hornets.

Atlanta erased an 11-point lead in the third quarter with the help of Mookie Blaylock, who got 12 points in the period. His 3-pointer with one minute to play tied the score 92-92.

Charlotte missed five of six free throws down the stretch and clung to a 93-92 lead when the Hawks got the hall back. Blaylock drihhled past the time line to the right wing, where he passed to Long, who manoeuvered between two defenders for the wioning hasket.

After three timeouts, the Hornets were reduced to a desperation 3-pointer hy Mourning, whose attempt wouldn't have counted anyway.

Blaylock led Atlanta with 24 points on 9-for-21 shooting. Long finished with 18, Smith got 16, Tyrone Corbin scored 13 and Andrew Lang added 12 for the Hawks.

Spurs 112, Nuggets 109 OT: In Denver, David Rohinson scored 42 points as the San Antonio Spurs moved one step closer to securing home court advantage throughout the playoffs with an overtime win over the Nuggets.

The Spurs led 110-107 when Avery Johnson fouled Denver's Greg Grainl on a 3-point attempt with 4.8 seconds left. But Grant missed the third foul shot.

Dikembe Mutombo grabbed the offensive rebound — his 20th rebound of the game — hut couldn't coovert a short shot over Rohinson.

Robinson, who also had 14 rebounds, sealed the win with two free throws with 1.5 seconds left.

The Spurs, who moved two games ahead of Utah for the best record in the Western Conference and the league, overcame a 14-point first-half deficit hut couldn't withstand a ferocious Denver rally in the fourth quarter.

Pacers 114, Timberwolves 75: In Indianapolis, the Pacers moved closer to their first NBA divison championship with a trouncing of the Minnesota Timherwolves in their most lopsided victory this season.

The victory gave Indiana 50 wins in an NBA season for the first time since joining the league and put the Pacers 1 games ahead of Charlotte in the Central Divison with three games to go. The Hornets lost ground by falling to Atlanta 94-93 Sunday.

The Pacers can clinch the division with any combination of two victories or two Charlotte losses.

Rik Smits led the Pacers with 22 points and Derrick McKey added 20.

Bulls 111, Knicks 90: In Chicago, Scottie Pippen scored 25 of his 29 points in the first half, making sure the Chicago Bulls wouldn't need magnificence from Michael Jordan to beat the New York Knicks.

Jordan, who scored 55 points in a 113-111 victory at New York two weeks ago, had 28 points on 8-of-19 shooting.

Pippen, who hadn't played since last Tuesday because of the flu, shot 11-of-13 in the first half, when Chicago took a 67-47 lead.

Toni Kukoc added 20 points and 10 assists for the Bulls, who have won nioe of their last 10. Charles Smith scored 22 points and Patrick Ewing 17 for the Knicks, who had a five-game winning streak snapped.

Lakers 125, Mavericks 111: In Inglewood, California, Cedric Ceballos followed up a 40-point effort with 33 points as Los Angeles beat Dallas and snapped its four-game losing streak.

RESULTS

Atlanta	94	Charlotte	93
San Antonio	112	Denver	109. OT
Indiana	114	Minnesota	75
Chicago	111	New York	90
L.A. Lakers	125	Dallas	111

World Youth Soccer Championship

Honduras match abandoned, coach apologises after 7-1 loss to Netherlands

DOHA (AP) — The coach of the Honduran football team made a puhlic apology here Sunday after his side had four men seot off during their World Youth Championship match against the Netherlands.

Honduras lost the match 7-1. The game was abandoned after 77 minutes with the Central Americans left with just six players on the field. As well as the four men dismissed by the Japanese referee Masayoshi Okada, they also had Luis Oseguera stretched off.

At that time of the game, they had also used their three permitted suhstitutes. The rules of the sport say that a team has to have at least seven players on the pitch. If not, the game must be abandooed.

"I apologise to the Dutch team and the people here for what happened tonight," said Honduran coach Luis Camargo.

"I can assure you that the four will severely be punished by the foothall federadon. We are a small nation and do not have the experience of playing in such a hig event," Camargo said.

Alex Bailey was the first player ordered off in the 17th minute followed hy Orvin Cahrera (45), Hector Rodriguez (70) and Luis Lagos (73).

They also had three other players booked. Honduras had skipper Fabio Ulloa sent off in their opening match against Portugal on Friday.

The Dutch goals came from Mendel Witzenhausen (9, 23 and 74 minutes), Nordin Wooter (3 and 44), Rohert Gehring (65) and Wilfred Bouma (76).

Honduras scored their goal from the penalty spot through Oseguera in the 48th minute. In other matches Sunday, Cameroon defeated Australia 3-2; Syria beat Qatar 1-0 while Chile and Burundi drew 1-1.

Mark Viduka gave Australia the lead after 10 minutes hut Cameroon hit hack through Ndiefi McDonald (51 and 65) to lead 2-1.

The Australians levelled in 70 minutes through Viduka hut Mahop Ntamag Mahop gave Camerooo the three points in the dying seconds.

Syria beat Qatar 1-0 with a goal from Nihad Boshi in the 53rd minute. The home-side had Rashid Al-Muhazaa aod captain Mohammed Salem sent off.

Burundi drew 1-1 with Chile. Chile's goal came from Sehastian Rozental after 13 minutes. Burundi's reply came from Blaise Butunungu seven minutes from the end.

The number of players sent off in the competition has now reached fifteen.

Monday's matches see Brazil play Russia, Germany meet Costa Rica, Portugal play Argenona while Japan take on Spain.

Major League Baseball

Pitchers finally getting ready for the real thing

The Associated Press

BARRY BONDS and Ken Griffey Jr. gave everyone a gilmpes of what they saw last season.

Orel Hershiser, John Burkett and Pete Harnisch gave their new teams a peek at the kind of pitching they might see this season.

And Jose Canseco provided a new sight — walking a picket line with locked-out umpires before Boston played Texas on Sunday night.

"I don't know how much it's going to affect their negotiations," Canseco said. "I would love to have an impact."

Eight umpires held informational picketing, wearing signs that said "scabs go home" and handing out leaflets. Canseco put a sign around his neck, too, hefore going back inside to play for the Red Sox.

"It goes to show you right there that one of the prime players in the game is standing behind us," Al Umpire John Hirschbeck said.

Bonds and Griffey both hit their third home runs of the spring.

Bonds, who has played in four exhihition games for San Francisco, hit a 470-foot shot agaiost the Chicago Cubs. He hit 37 homers last year in the strike-shortened season.

Griffey, who has played in only three spring games, hit an opposite-field drive. He led The Alwith 40 home runs last year.

"All three of his home runs have been hit to left field, and that's a good sign because it shows he's going with the pitch," Mariners manager Lou Piniella said.

Hershiser, in his first game with someone other than Los Angeles, looked good for two innings for the Cleveland Indians.

"Same thing in an Indians uniform as a Dodgers uniform," he said. "It's still 60 feet, 6 inches to the plate, still 90 feet to first. Still playing with a hunch of great guys."

Hershiser, 36, signed as a free agent this month. Facing the Kansas City Royals, he gave up an unearned ruo on three hits.

"They hit a lot of choppers, a lot of ground balls. That told me my hall was reactiog properly," he said. "If I'm getting the movement and the velocity is there naturally, that's all I can hope for."

Burkett, traded hy San Francisco to Texas in the offseason and later a signed hy the Florida Marlins, pitched four innings. He allowed one run and struck out three.

Harnisch, traded by Houstoo to the New York Mets in the offseason, didn't have such a stellar pitching line, giving two runs on three hits in two inoings.

Still, Mets manager Dallas Green was satisfied with what he saw.

"It was a good outing," Greeo said. "He was upset with one pitch, hut he threw a few changeups which I liked."

Jimmy Key pitched five near-perfect innings for the New York Yankees against Atlanta. He allowed only one hit, walked none aod struck out two.

Key and Tony Fernandez were the only Yankees regulars who made the 45-mioute trip from Frot Lauderdale, Fla., to the Easter game in west Palm Beach, and that angered Atlanta geoeral manager John Schuerholz.

"I think it is hush," he said. "There are regulations that clearly specify how many regulars each team has to hring on road games in the spring. The Yankees don't have their own set of rules, hut they must have felt like they did today."

For years, spring training guidelines have stated that visiting clubs must have four usual starters, not including the pitcher. The regulation was put into effect to ensure that fans wbo pay for a major league exhibition — not a "B" game or split-squad game — see top players.

Fernandez, usually a shortstop, hatted ninth as the designated hitter. As part of revamped rules for the shortened spring training, Al teams are being allowed to use the DH wheo they play at NL parks.

John Smoltz, in his first appearance since July 31, pitched two scoreless innings for the Braves and struck out two. He had surgery Sept. 8 to remove a bone spur and chips from his right elbow.

"What this outing does is make all those mornings of getting up at 6:45 and going for treatment worth it," Smoltz said. "I really didn't think I was going to throw that hard."

A crowd of 5,822 saw the Braves rally to win in the ninth on RBI singles hy Tony Graffanino and Mike Warner.

NFL legend ready to retire

SAN FRANCISCO (AFP) — Joe Montana's retirement, expected here Tuesday, concludes at age 38 what many consider the greatest career in American foothall history.

Montana led the San Francisco 49ers to four Super Bowl titles, became the only three-time Most Valuahle Player of the National Football League's championship game and became the standard to which all others are compared.

"You have to consider him the greatest quarterback who ever played the game because he could do everything," said former 49ers' coach Bill Walsh, who guided three Super Bowl championship teams with Montana directing the offense.

Montana and receiver Jerry Rice became one of the most potent combinations in the sport's history playing together for the 49ers. Montana's never-say-die attitude created some of the NFL's most memorahle moments of the 1980s.

His first starring moment is recalled simply as "The Catch" and has been shown on U.S. television often cnough to be part of a collective memory for all NFL fans.

The play came in the 1982 NFL semi-finals against Dallas. The 49ers trailed by six poiots with only 51 seconds remaining. Montana was forced to hackpedal to his right under the rush of three Cowboy defenders.

Montana lofted a desperate pass high into the back of the end zooe and Dwight Clark grahhed it for the winning touchdown. The 49ers beat Ciocinnati for the Super Bowl crown that year and did so again seven years later on what fans call "The Drive."

The 49ers trailed hy three points with 3:23 remaining and were 92 yards from the Bengals' end zone when Montana guided a 49er march.

Bad weather postpones America's Cup

SAN DIEGO (AFP) — An Alaskan storm hlew through here Sunday, hringing with it 30-knot wind gusts and four-metre seas that postponed America's Cup yacht racing on the challeoger and defender courses to Monday.

Looking at the flags outside the oneAustralia compound, Aussie Helmsman Rod Davis had to agree with the decision. Didn't want to, hut had to.

"As much as it hurts us, the race committee made the right call," Davis said. "But, realistically, losing today's race is a double whammy for us."

The cancellation not only killed a race in favourahle strong winds, hut also cost oneAustralia a much needed practice day.

OneAustralia proved Team New Zealand was beatahle on Saturday. Sailing a near-perfect race, oneAustralia led Team Zealand throughout the six-leg, 28.8-kilometre race and hit the finish lioe a full 15 seconds before the Kiwis.

GOREN BRIDGE

WITH OMAR SHARIF & TANNAH HIRSCH

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ANSWERS TO WEEKLY BRIDGE QUIZ

Q.1—Neither vulnerable, as Snuth you hold:
♠8 ♡653 ◇A108764 ♣AQ5
Partner opens the bidding with one no trump. What do you respond?
A.—Since you have so many cards in the minors, partner's values rate to be in the majors, so don't bother looking for a mimr-suit contract. Bid three no trump At the table, South jumped to three diamonds, North raised and the final contract was five diamonds. The defenders cashed the ace-king of hearts and ace of spades and the same 10 tricks were available at no trump.

Q.2—Both vulnerable, as South you hold:
♠AKJ7 ♡Q ◇A75 ♣AKJ98
The bidding has proceeded:

East	South	West	North
1 ♡	Dbl	Pass	1 ♠
Pass	?		

What do you bid now?
A.—Despite the fact that the bidding was opened in front of you, there could still be a slam your way. No spade raise will convey that information to partner. The correct way to show your strength is to start with a cue-bid of the enemy suit. Bid two hearts. Of course, you intend to raise to four spades at your next turn.

Q.3—Neither vulnerable, as South you hold:
♠K1054 ♡A10 ◇Q1073 ♣K105
Ynur right-hand opponent opens the bidding with one club. Whai action do you take?
A.—Had your club and heart holdings been reversed, we would suggest a takeoul double. Since a one-heart response would leave you awkwardly placed with this holding and you do not have a suil good enough for even a one-level overcall, all you can do for the moment is pass and await developments.

Q.4—As South, vulnerable, you hold:
♠J75 ♡Q8643 ◇Q2 ♣AQ2
The bidding has proceeded:

North	East	South	West
1 ♠	Pass	2 ♡	Pass
2 ♠	Pass	?	

What do you bid now?
A.—Your response of two hearts has promised another bid. Since most of your values are "soft," you do not have enough to commit your side to game. The best you can do is invite partner to bid on by raising to three spades.

Q.5—Both vulnerable, as South you hold:
♠AQ7 ♡KJ85 ◇Q7532 ♣10
Partner opens the bidding with one club. What do you respond?
A.—There is a school that insists responder must bid a four-card major before even a six-card minor! Include us out. Since we intend taking at least two bids, there is no reason not to bid our longer suit first. After all, if North has four hearts they can be introduced over our one-diamond response.

Q.6—East-West vulnerable, as South you hold:
♠Void ♡AQJ7632 ◇A1065 ♣Q9
What is your opening bid after partner and right-hand opponent pass?
A.—Where are all the spades? We are hesitant to let the opponents in cheaply when we don't own the master suit. Under the circumstances, we would preempt with four hearts in the hope that the level will silence the opponents. We'll apologize to partner in the unlikely event that we've missed a slam.

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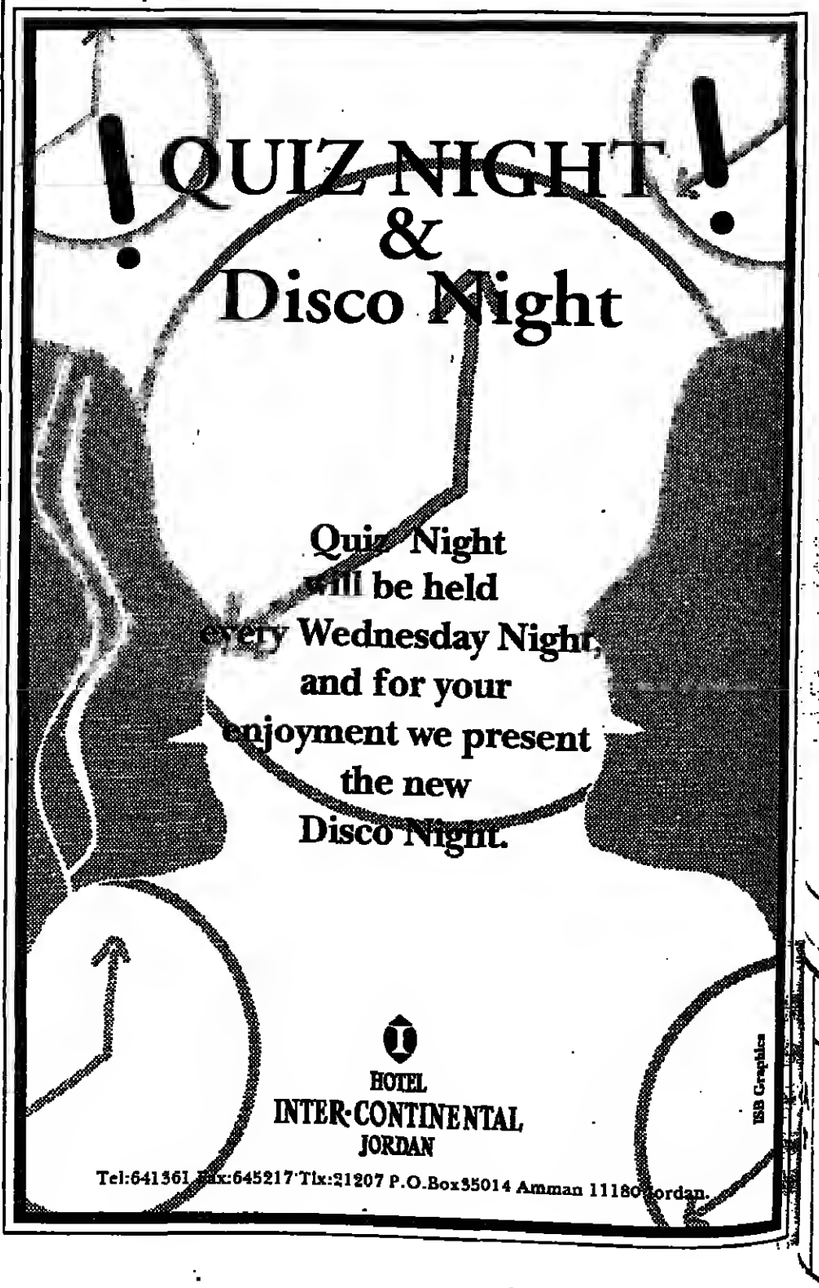

Graf wins 4th title of year

HOUSTON (Agencies) — World number one Steffi Graf cruised past first-time WTA finalist Asa Carlsson of Sweden 6-1, 6-1, in 68 minutes Sunday, remaining oobeaten in 1995 and winning the 430,000-dollar Houston Championship.

Graf rose to 18-0 this year and collected 79,000 dollars for her fourth crown of 1995, her first on clay. The German star won earlier titles at Key Biscayne, Delray Beach and Paris and has not lost a set so far this year.

"I see some thing I can work on," Graf said. "But overall, I haven't had too many troubles this week. I could concentrage better. But I knew what I had to do to win the points and I did that."

Graf lost only 12 games in her eight sets here, dropping no more than two games io any set of her clay seasoo debut. She has won $442,500 so far this year, taking her career earnings above 15 million dollars.

Carlsson, who takes away $35,000, was hroken twice in losing the first four games of the final set. She held in the fifth game but Graf held and then added one final service break to capture the match.

"She played too good," Carlsson said. "I tried my best. But she just played every point great. I definitely got a lesson. She has a lot of experience. It was exciting because she's oumber one and this is the first time I played her."

Graf overpowered a weak field here that was reduced even more when second seed Magdaleoa Maleeva aod third seed Mary Joe Fernandez withdrew before their first matches.

Fonrth seed Iva Majoli and fifth seed Zina Garrisoo Jacksoo were ousted in their openers and Graf herself eliminated sixth seed Sabine Hack 6-2, 6-2, in the semi-final.

Steffi Graf

Back strain puts Agassi out

World number one Andre Agassi pulled ont of the Hong Koog Open here as doctors advised him to take two weeks rest while undergoing treatment for lower back strain.

Agassi began complaining of back troohle in the Davis Cup tie against Itaiy three weeks ago in Palermo, Sicily.

The pain flared up duriog his opening match in the Japan Open in Tokyo last week — which he lost io Sunday's final to U.S. campatriot Jim Courier.

"I'll be taking massage and ultrasoond treatmeot and resting for two weeks," said Agassi, the U.S. and Australian Open holder, before leaving Tokyo Monday for the West Cost of the United States.

"I'l have my back looked at closer at home. Everyone around me is confideot that rest is a key factor for me now."

Agassi, twice a finalist in the French Open, does oot want to compromise his chances of fioally winning the clay court Grand Slam event, which hegins May 29 at Roland Garros in Paris.

Agassi said he hopes to play on clay from May 1 in Atlanta, before travelling to Hamburg for more seasoning on the surface before the start of the French event.

Hoog Kong Open organisers here are now counting oo Asian favourite Michael Chang, the defeoding champion, to pull the crowds.

The Chinese-Ameriean loves to play in the Far East and gets the type of welcome often reserved for the flamboyant Agassi in much of the rest of the world.

As he arrived for Mooday's opening ceremooy on Centre Court, police and bodyguards kept a crowd of his young fans at bay.

Lower-ranked seeds went into action oo Mooday. Seventh seeded Dutchman Jan Siemerink beat Australian Wally Masur 6-4, 6-4, and eighth-seeded Martin Damm of the Czech Republic outlasted Alexander Mronz of Germany in a tiebreak battle, 7-6 (7/3), 7-6 (12-10).

Muster wins again on clay

Austria's Thomas Muster won his 19th consecutive final on clay Sunday, running over Sweden's Magnus Larssoo 6-2, 6-1, 6-4 in the Conde de Godo ATP tournament.

"I feel like I've been run over by a train ," Larsson told reporters.

The victory in the final gave the 27-year-old left-hander a record 20th title on clay since the ATP Tour began in 1990. Twenty-five of his 26 professional titles are on clay and he is 16-0 in matches this season on the surface.

"I don't think I'm unbeatable in finals, but it does seem like every time I'm in the finals I'm winning," Muster said.

ATP tennis rankings

American Jim Courier, who beat world number ooe Andre Agassi in the final of the Japan Opeo on Sunday, moved up the ATP rankings from 15th place to 12th on Monday.

1. Andre Agassi (USA)	4603 pts
2. Pete Sampras (USA)	4216
3. Boris Becker (Ger)	3274
4. Yevgeny Kafelnikov (Rus)	2590
5. Goran Ivanisevic (Cro)	2557
6. Sergi Bruguera (Spa)	2556
7. Michael Stich (Ger)	2467
8. Michael Chang (USA)	2464
9. Alberto Berasategui (Spa)	2304
10. Magnus Larsson (Swe)	2126
11. Wayne Ferreira (AfS)	2116
12. Jim Courier (USA)	2068
13. Thomas Muster (Aut)	2051
14. Todd Martin (USA)	1974
15. Richard Krajicek (Ned)	1898

Depleted Juventus, Dortmund resume hostilities

PARIS (AFP) — Trehle-chasing Juventus have three players sidelined and Borussia Dortmund must suffer three player suspensions, three ruled out hy injury and two doubtful starters for Tuesday's UEFA Cup semi-final.

Keeper Angelo Peruzzi and striker Gianluca Vialli are injured, and sweeper Moreno Torricelli is suspended for Jnventus.

Juventus, who beat Lazio 2-1 (3-1 on aggregate) in midweek to put them into the Italian Cup final, travel to Dortmund with the tie delicately halanced at 2-2.

Parma, with a 2-1 advantage, host Bayer Leverkusen in the night's other semi-final.

A Roberto Baggio double earned Juventus a 2-1 win against Reggiana on Saturday to move 11 points clear of second-placed Parma in the Italian championship.

Baggio, who was out for more than three months this season with a knee injury, said: "I have certainly had a difficult period, hut it is now all behind me."

Dortmund, ahead of Werder Bremen by one point in the Bundesliga, will have to field almost a reserve side as their first string is decimaied hy suspension and injury.

In the first leg, French referee Marc Batta waved eight yellow cards — five for Dortmund.

Three of Dortmund's key players — internationals Andreas Moller, Matthias Sammer, and Karlheinz Riedle — were consequently hanned for the second leg.

Dortmund issued a plea to UEFA, but were told: "You can't appeal against yellow cards."

Swiss striker Stephane Chapuisat and Deomark's Flemming Povlsen are already out through injury to add to the problems of Dortmund coach Ottmar Hitzfeld.

Chapuisat, 25, faces surgery after tearing knee ligaments in training, just two days after scoring one goal and creating another in their 2-0 quarter-final, second leg win over Lazio.

Martin Kree is also out, and Stefan Reuter and Ibrahim Tanko are douhtful, spelling the neeessity of hringing in untried reserves.

Dortmund, trying to forget their 6-I thrashing on aggregate in the UEFA Cup final two years ago, must fear a similar crusbing loss.

In the other semi-final, Bayer Leverkusen have sacked their coach since the 2-I loss in Germany against Parma in the first match.

Erich Ribbeck was hired as coach in place of Slav Dragoslav Stepanovic.

General manager Rainer Calmund explained: "The differences between Stepanovic and the team could not be patched up. We had to react."

Leverkusen, the 1988 UEFA Cup champions, warmed up with a 1-0 win against Bayer Uerdingen on Thursday thanks to a Rudi Voeller penalty.

Antonio Benarrivo is suspended for Parma, the 1992/93 Cup Winners Cup champions, meaning coach Nevio Scala will have to reshuffle his defensive line.

Parma, 11 points behind Juventus and almost certainly out of the Italian title race, still have a chance to show Juventus who is boss in this UEFA Cup.

In a further power struggle, this event is a hattle between Germany and Italy for European supremacy.

Following Italian elubs' financial problems, many German stars have returned bome. Italian presidents now look to cheaper markets, such as Portugal, for foreign replacements.

Eintracht Frankfurt vice-presideot Bernd Holzenbein, wbo won the World Cup as a player in 1974, believes a wind of change is in the air. "The Bundesliga is beginning to compete on an equal basis with the Serie A," he said.

The winner of the Leverkusen/Parma tie hosts the first leg of the final on May 3, with the return on May 17.

UEFA CUP

SPORTS IN BRIEF

Czechs happy with Fed Cup draw

LA MANGA, Spain (AFP) — Jana Novotna and Helena Sukova of the Czech Repuhlic will be happy with the draw at this year's Fed Cup qualifying event here, grouping them with Poland, Britain and Slovenia. In world ranking terms, they are already assured of success in the group, leaving the other three nations to scrap among themselves for the vital secood place in Group-A and a place in the last eight. Group B is headed hy Russia and though Elena Likhovtseva and Eleman Makarova, ranked 46 and 47 respectively, are out-ranked hy Georgia's Leila Meshki (35), Russia should come safely through with neighbours Georgia at the expense of Hungary and the Ukraine. Martina Hingis, 14, who leads Switzerland's challenge, will find the going tough in Group-C where the favourites aree Belarus leaving the second place to be contested between Finland and Latvia. Group-D offers the tightest competition. Belginm's Dominiqoe Monami and Laurence Courtois will be staving off a stroog challenge from Croatia and Romania while Israel will be battling to stave relegation into the lower qualifying division.

58 banned from soccer

KUALA LUMPUR (AP) — Fifty-eight soccer players who confessed to fixing matches in oational league have been banned from playing anywhere in the world for one to four years. The Football Association of Malaysia said Monday two players will be suspended for four years, 12 for three years, 10 for 2½ years, 19 for two years, eight for 1½ years and seveo for one year. The punished players also are being investigated by police since August, but no charges have been filed yet. The players are accused of taking bribes from bookmakers of fix results of matches in the 16-team premier league. One player was reported to have been paid as much as 40,000 ringgit ($16,000) to let in a goal.

Gaudino faxes court appearance

MANNHEIM, Germany (AFP) — Manchester City's German international Maurizio Gaudino is expected to appear in coort here soon after Easter to answer charges of car theft. Before his move to England from Eintrach Frnakfurt, Gaodino was questioned hy police for 24-bours last December in connection with a ring of car thieves who exported stolen Germao vehicles. Sunday's Frankfurter Allgemeine Sonntagszeitung quoted prosecutor Jocheo Seiler as saying, "a decision on his indictmeot will be taken after Easter." Police allege the midfield player hao been a member of the ring for three years.

5 sent off in Rio derby

RIO DE JANEIRO (R) — Five players and a coach were sent off and oine players shown the yellow card in a hrutal Rio de Janeiro derhy at the weekend. Botafogo beat Flamengo 1-0 striker Guga coming on as a substitute, scoriog the winner and then joining the dismissals, all in the space of I0 minutes. The result put Botafogo three points ahead of Flamengo at the top of the final stage of the Rio de Janeiro championship.

Children in Cantona class

MANCHESTER (AFP) — Amid continuing uncertainty about his future at Manchester United, Eric Cantona will start his programme of 120 hours of commuoity service teaching football skills to children from the Salford area of Manchester on Tuesday. A spokeswoman at Manchester United's Old Traffod ground confirmed on Monday the coaching was going ahead bot declined to give further details. Cantona was given the community service order on March 23 when he won his appeal against a two-week jail sentence for assaulting a Crystal Palace fan. Cantona has also been suspeoded from all foothall until September 30 hy the Foothall Association and fined a total of 30,000 pounds for assaulting the allegedly abusive fan during United's match at Selhurst Park in late January.

Maradona absent for Racing win

BUENOS AIRES (R) — Racing Club achieved an unexpected Argentine championship win at Boca Juniors at the weekend — hut their coach Diego Maradona was absent. Racing won 1-0 to record their first victory in Boca's La Bombonera Stadium since 1975 and end their opponent's unbeaten seven-match run. Maradooa, who has been given a 20-day leave by Racing, was at home as his side achieved their best result since he and Carlos Fren took over as joint coaches at the start of the year.

Deportivo remain 6 points behind Real Madrid

MADRID (AP) — Deportivo de la Coruna kept its slim hopes alive for a Spanish league title with a 3-1 win Sunday over Real Sociedad to stay within six points of league-leading Real Madrid with nine rounds to play.

Deportivo, second last season and third the year before, took a I-0 lead midway through the first half on a Francisco "Fran" Gonzalez Perez goal.

Real Sociedad's Imanol Alguacil tied the match in the 49th, but Fran struck again io the 54th minute to make it 2-1 and Brazilian international Bebeto scored his I2th of the season in the 82nd to clinch the victory.

Real Madrid, a 2-0 winner Saturday at archrival Atletico de Madrid, has 44 points to 38 for Deportivo. Chilean Ivan Zamorano scored both for Real Madrid to increase his league-leading goal total to 24.

Four-time defending champion Barcelona was hapless in a scoreless draw Sunday at Oviedo io hold third place with 36 points.

In other games: Sevilla 1, Valladolid 0; Valencia 2, Betis 1; Compostela 0, Alhacete 0; Racing de Santander 0, Sporting de Gijon 0; Tenerife 3, Celta 0; Espanyol 3, Athletic de Bilhao 1; Zaragoza 3, Logrones 0.

In Seville, Juan "Juanito" Fransico Rodriguez scored in the 68th minute to give Seville the victory.

In Valencia, Raul Ihanez gave the winners a 1-0 lead in the 9th minute and Antonio Poyatos got the clincher in the 82nd. Betis threatened with a peualty in the 88th minote hy Bosnian Hristo Vidakovic.

In Tenerife, Luis Miguel Ramis scored in the first half, Juan Antonio Pizzi scored his 13th of the season in the 69th, and Ignacio Conte added the final in the 77th.

In Barcelona, Ernesto Valverde scored in the 14th for a 1-0 athletic lead, hut Espanyol's Francisco Lopez Alfaro tied it in the final minute of first half. Jose Rojo Martin scored the winner for Espanyol on a header in the 53rd, and Jordi Lardiu got an insurance goal one minute later.

In Zaragoza on Saturday Javier Aguado scored in the 18th, Gustavo Poyet struck in the 40th and Juan Eduardo Esnaider finished off the scoring in the 77th minute in a 3-0 victory over last-place Logrones.

Zaragoza avoided an upset as it looked ahead to Thursday's Cnp Winners Cup semi-final, second-leg match at English side Chelsea.

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05:30 p.m — Prayer service and individual confessions (several priests)

20 April - Holy Thursday
05:00 p.m — Mass of the Lord's Supper.

21 April - Good Friday
12:00 p.m — Prayer service of the Lord's Passion

22 April - Holy Saturday
10:00 p.m — Mass of Easter Vigil, Latin Church of De La Salle (Freres)- Jabel Hussein

23 April - Easter Sunday
Masses of the Lord's Resurrection - in English
11:00 a.m. — Jabal Amman - Latin Church
12:00 noon — Jebal Lweibdah
12:00 noon — Swaifah
06:00 p.m. — Jebal Hussain

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Cinema PLAZA Tel.: 699238
Bruce Willis & John Travolta in PULP FICTION
Shows: 12:30, 3:30, 6:15, 8:30, 10:30

Cinema CONCORD Tel.: 677420
CONCORD '1'
Comedian star: Adel Imam — Bakhit & Andadileh
Shows: 12:30, 3:15, 6:00, 8:30, 11:00
CONCORD '2'
Jean-Claude Van Damm
STREET FIGHTER
Shows: 12:30, 3:30, 5:45, 11:00

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RAFSANJANI IN INDIA: Indian Prime Minister P.V. Narasimha Rao (right) and President Shankar Dayal Sharma (centre) welcome Iranian President Ali Akbar Hashemi Rafsanjani (left) at the Presidential Palace on Monday. Mr. Rafsanjani is the first Iranian head of state to visit India since the 1979 Islamic revolution (AFP photo)

Appointment of city managers does not aim at weakening elected mayors — Thuheirat

By Sa'eda Kilani
Special to the Jordan Times

AMMAN — The recent government decision to appoint city managers in governorate centres and district beadquarters ahead of municipal elections is not intended to weaken the powers of elected mayors, according to Minister of Municipal and Rural Affairs and the Environment Nader Thuheirat.

If anything, said Mr. Thuheirat, the appointment of city managers would help redoce the workload of mayors.

At least one former mayor, Yasser Omari of Zarqa, criticised the government decision saying there was a "question mark" over the move.

He sought to support his argument by pointing out that the decision to appoint city managers came only two months before the July 11 municipal elections. Mr. Omari said the government should have waited until the municipal elections.

In an interview with the Jordan Times, Mr. Thuheirat, who is also a member of the Lower House of Parliament, said the appointment of mnnicipal directors was purely an "executive" decision.

"Municipal directors are not appointed to compete with mayors," he said. "They are there to help mayors."

According to the Cabinet decision, which was taken on Saturday in line with a recommendation by Mr. Thuheirat, the main responsibilities of the city managers include implementation of decisions taken by municipal councils and preparation of municipal budgets.

The city manager, who can attend municipal council meeting without voting power, is also in charge of supervising municipal revenue collection.

The Cabinet decision covers the governorate headquarters of Salt, Irbid, Jerash, Ajloun, Mafraq, Ma'an, Karak, Tafileh, Aqaba and Madaba as well the district ceotres of Ramtha, Sama Rousan, Deir Abi Saeed, Deir Alla, Northern Shuneh and Southern Shuneh. It also covers the municipalities of Russeifeh and Zarqa.

Mr. Omari, whose municipal council was dissolved last September and replaced by a government-appointed committee, said: "Even if the decision was in the interests of the municipalities, the government should have waited until the mnnicipal elections."

Mr. Omari noted that once the municipal councils are elected, the city manager would be appointed by the elected mayor, vice-mayor and the administrative governor.

Under the new law, all municipal councils were dissolved pending new elections and government-appointed councils are now running the municipalities. As such, the government is also in charge of appointing the city managers.

Mr. Omari, however, welcomed the holding ot all municipal council elections on one day throughout the Kingdom as "a very positive step."

"Reducing the number of municipal councils from 600 and plus to 259 is also a great achievement," he said.

At the same time, he said, "despite the fact that appointing city managers was a standing request of municipal councils, why did the government not wait until the elections were held?"

Mr. Thuheirat countered by pointing out that the 1983 law on municipalities provided for the appointment of city managers, but had never been applied before. He said he did not see any reason why it should not be applied now.

"Instead of asking why we are applying the law now, we should ask why it was not applied earlier," he asserted.

The minister, a former mayor of northern Shuneh, said the mayorship was one difficult job that entailed enormous social and administrative responsibilities. He said an assistant to the mayor is necessary.

"The mayor has enormous responsibilities and has many public duties," said Mr. Thuheirat. "Even preparing the budget at a time when the population is growing is a big task."

Qadhafi ready for war over Haj flights

TRIPOLI (Agencies) — Libyan leader Muammar Qadhafi has said his country was ready to fight to enable Libyans to fly directly to Saudi Arabia for pilgrimage to Mecca.

"They (the Christians) launched a crusade when they accused Muslims of preventing them from reaching Jerusalem. We are ready for a war to reach Mecca," Colonel Qadhafi told Reuters in an interview on Sunday night.

He added that flights taking Libyans for pilgrimage to Islam's holiest shrine must be seen as exempt from a U.N. Security Council air embargo imposed on his country over the Lockerbie affair.

The ban on flights to and from Libya is part of sanctions, including arms sales, imposed in 1992 after Tripolie refused to hand over two Libyans wanted in connection with the 1988 bombing of Pan Am Flight 103 over Lockerbie, Scotland, in which 270 people died.

In Cairo, Egyptian Foreign Minister Amr Musa said his country was trying to find a way to allow Libyan pilgrims to fly to Saudi Arabia for Haj.

"There are ongoing contacts between Egypt, Libya and a number of other countries to see the best way to facilitate tbe trip of the Libyan pilgrims," Mr. Musa told reporters.

The pilgrimage season is in early May.

Although the United Nations could issue a waiver for the pilgrimage, Libya has not requested one, U.N. officials say.

If Col. Qadhafi made good on his threat, it would put neighbouring countries in a difficult position because they would find it politically impossible to block religious flights.

Libyan planes would have to fly over Egypt or Sudan to get to Saudi Arabia.

Egyptian Information Minister Safwat Al Sherif, a close adviser of President Hosni Muharak, travelled to Libya last week to discuss the issue with Col. Qadhafi.

The weekly Al Arabi newspaper reported Monday that Mr. Sherif suggested as a compromise that the pilgrims use foreign airlines from Egypt, Algeria or Holland, but said Col. Qadhafi turned down the idea.

Tripoli-based Arab diplomats said they expected the flights to start on Tnesday from Tripoli and Benghazi airports.

They said Egyptian planes would be used to fly the pilgrims to Jeddah in Saudi Arabia because Libyan airliners bad been poorly maintained since the flight ban was imposed.

Since 1992, Libyan pilgrims have flown there from other countries after leaving Libya by land or sea. As a political statement, some Libyan pilgrims took a camel train through Egypt in 1994 and others went to Jerusalem in 1993.

Col. Qadhafi told Reuters his country had run out of patience on the direct flights issue after three years of the ban.

"We gave them (Security Council members) an opportunity when our pilgrims went to Jerusalem and by camels, where we suffered and some pilgrims died en route, but that did not move their conscience. We are forced now to go to the pilgrimage and will do it each year directly through Libyan airspace whatever the price," Col. Qadhafi said.

Wearing flowing, traditional Libyan robes and speaking on the green of the Azizia Barracks in Tripoli, Col. Qadhafi said he sees the pilgrims' flights as an exception which does not mean that Libya intends to violate the Security Council ban.

"We do not want to violate tbe resolutions of the so-called Security Council, nor do we demand that any state violate them, but the pilgrimage is another question," Col. Qadhafi said before recalling the Crusades' historical precedent.

"Mecca is a separate affair which has nothing to do with the embargo or the Security Council resolutions," he added.

Mr. Qadhafi at the end of March said that pilgrims would be transported by the Libyan national airline and tbat Tripoli had already handed to Saudi Arabia the flight schedules.

Saudi Arabia Interior Minister Prince Nayef Ben Abdul Aziz, reacting to the Libyan announcement, said earlier this month Saudi Arabia would receive any pilgrim who had proper documents, "no matter what means be uses to arrive in."

"We are not going to Saudi Arabia, we are going to God's house (in Mecca)," Col. Qadhafi said when asked what was the final Saudi decision.

Col. Qadhafi on Monday warned African nationals working in the country could starve to death because of the U.N. sanctions, the official agency JANA reported.

"The sanctions have affected our African brothers, they are left without job opportunities. They could face a difficult situation threatened by starvation and death," he said.

Highlighting that all African states north of the Equator have nationals working in Libya, he urged the countries to "find a solution to avoid a catastrophe for these people."

Col. Qadhafi was talking to labour ministers gathered in Tripoli to attend the Organisation of African Unity (OAU) labour committee meeting to open on Tuesday.

He also voiced fears that jobless Africans faced with economic hardship in their own countries could try to emigrate illegally to Europe.

Foreign Minister Omar Al Muntasser said last month that if the U.N. sanctions continue, Tripoli could be forced to expel its 2.5 million foreign workers.

Israeli opposition stages W.Bank-Netanya march

BEIT LID JUNCTION (Agencies) — Thousands of Israelis marched Monday from the West Bank to the Mediterranean Sea, protesting plans to turn over more land to the Palestinians.

The march — across the narrowest part of Israel within its pre-1967 borders — was meant to illustrate the country's vulnerability if the government cedes control of the West Bank to the Palestinians, as outlined in the Israel-Palestine Liberation Organisation (PLO) accord.

It is 16 kilometres from the Israeli checkpoint outside the West Bank town of Tulkarm, where the march began, to the Mediterranean coast at Netanya.

"It's committing suicide to give it back," said right-wing opposition leader Benjamin Netanyahu, as he led about 6,000 people who covered that distance in less than two hours.

Marchers carried Israeli flags, banners and campaign posters for the right-wing Likud and the National Religious Party and chanted "I don't want to be the next victim."

Sixty-five Israelis have been killed since October in attacks by militants trying to scuttle ongoing Israel-PLO peace talks.

Some protesters carried a paper mache mannequin, labelled with a sign that read "Three bours for a suicide bomber on foot."

"This area's so sbort — there's no way we can give it up," said Stephanie Haimovitz of Kfar Sava. "If a two-year-old and a four-year-old can walk it, then any Arab can easily get across."

Prime Minister Yitzhak Rabin says he opposes a total withdrawal from the West Bank. But the September 1993 Israel-PLO accord calls for autonomy in all of the West Bank during a five-year interim stage.

Critics fear that in talks on the area's final status, the PLO will press for a state in all the territory that was autonomous.

Israel and the PLO are holding talks on extending the autonomy established 11 months ago in the Gaza Strip and Jericho to the rest of the West Bank. But support for the deal among Israelis is being sapped by the continuing violence.

"This is a popular demonstration of growing public sentiment against continuation of a false peace with the Palestinians," said Daniel Diker, who helped organise the march.

Bahrain frees 120 held in wave of unrest

MANAMA (Agencies) — Bahrain on Monday announced it had released 120 people arrested in a wave of unrest which bas swept the Gulf archipelago in tbe past months, local papers reported.

"Bahrain has released 120 Bahraini detainees after completing the investigation into their involvement in recent violent subversive activities," an Interior Ministry official said in the reports.

Violent clashes erupted in early December after the arrest of Shiite Muslim clerie Sheikh Ali Salman who had called for political reforms and the restoration of parliament suspended in 1975.

He was later deported and fled to London where he has reqnested political asylum.

The human rights group amnesty International said in a report released at the end of March that it had the names of 700 people detained in the emirate since December, but believed many more were being held.

Most of those held are Shiites, Amnesty said.

Exiled opposition groups said that more than 3,000 people had been arrested in sporadic violence which has flared in the emirate since December.

Local newspapers on Monday quoted the Interior Ministry official as saying the 120 were freed after authorities completed "investigations into their involvement in recent rioting and subversive activities."

He did not give names or say when they were freed.

At least 10 civilians and three policemen have been killed in the protests demanding the release of political detainees and the restoration of parliament, dissolved in 1975.

Bahrain's Emir, Sbeikh Isa Ben Salman Al Khalifa, oo Sunday met Bahraini dignitaries "who voiced their readiness to do all they could to maiotain tbe stability, security and progress of Bahrain," the official Gulf News Agency said.

Sheikh Isa "expressed appreciation for their sincere efforts and that the people of Bahrain were and would remain as one family."

Interior ministers of the Gulf Cooperation Council grouping Babrain, Saudi Arabia, Kuwait, Qatar, Oman and the United Arab Emirates were due to hold an extraordinary meeting in Bahrain on Tuesday, the agency said, without giving further details.

Deputies accuse Kuwait ministry of wasting funds

KUWAIT (AP) — A parliamentary sub-committee has accused the Defence Ministry of wasting public funds, protecting wrongdoers and leading Kuwait towards another catastrophe, according to a report published Monday.

"The Defence Ministry's expense programme are not geared towards sopporting the efficiency of the Kuwaiti military... but towards wasting pnblic money without showing any results on the ground," said the report, published in the independent Al Qabas daily.

The sub-committee was set up in May 1993 to investigate alleged kickbacks on weapons purchases made after Kuwait was liberated in February 1991 after a seven-month Iraqi occupation.

It is part of a committee that the emirate's opposition-dominated parliament set op in December 1992 to investigate the events that led up to Iraq's August 1990 invasion.

The report said the Defence Ministry has purchased large amounts of equipment and spare parts that were either not oeeded or have not been used.

It said, for example, that propellor-driven Sborts Tucano aircraft, used as trainers and for counter-insurgency operations, and spare parts worth $66 million are gathering dust in storage, the report said.

The sub-committee also accused ministry officials of signing contracts for large sums with Western companies to clear the millions of landmines and unexploded bombs littering the emirate, while these companies sub-contract the work to others, often for half the value of the original contract.

It cited a $134 million contract signed with a U.S. firm, CMSA of Florida, in October 1991, saying that the ministry signed the deal for clearing Kuwait's southwestern desert despite objections by experts that the cost was too high.

"The sub-committee has suffered from... a lack of cooperation," the report said.

It accused government officials of "providing incorrect information," and criticised the Defence Ministry for not takiog action against wrongdoers.

The report named several officials, but Al Qabas did not publish the names for legal reasons.

"If the government does not solve these problems, they will lead the country to an impasse in the near future," the report concluded.

Turkish Consulate attacked

STOCKHOLM (Agencies) — Turkey's consulate in the southern Swedish town of Malmo was damaged overnight by unknown attackers who smashed windows and hurled paint inside, the Swedish news agency TT reported on Monday.

TT said police found no clue as to whether the attack was politically motivated.

Last month a Turkish government travel bureau in Stockholm was set alight but police put out the fire before serious damage occurred.

Sweden has a large Turkish immigrant population and it was not known if the attacks were the work of racists or anti-government activists within the Turkish and Kurdish communities.

Petrol bombs were thrown at two Turkish social clubs in southern Germany Sunday night, causing heavy damage to one of them, police said.

They said they suspected Turkish extremists of carrying out the attacks in the towns of Backnang and Ditzingen. No one was hurt.

Six Turks have been arrested in connection with petrol bomb attacks on five Turkish banks in the western city of Cologne on Saturday. Police said some of them had a record of activism for the banned Turkish militant left-wing group Dev Sol.

Turkish premises in Germany have been the target of several waves of attacks in the last two years.

In Sunday's attack, the headquarters of a Turkisb sports association burned down in Backnang, near Stuttgart, police said.

A firebomb was hurled through a window of the two-storey building, which caught fire.

NEWS IN BRIEF

Qatar, PNA sign aviation accord

OCCUPIED JERUSALEM (R) — The Palestinian National Authority (PNA) and Qatar have signed an aviation agreement that would allow two Gulf Arab airlines to fly to Gaza and Jericho once the self-rule areas have built airports, a PNA official said on Monday. "Qatari and Gulf airlines will fly to Palestinian airports in self-rule areas, and the Palestinian airlines will fly to Qatar's airports," Fayez Zeydan, head of the Palestinian civil aviation department, said in a news release. Mr. Zeydan, who signed the accord last week in Qatar, said the Qatari Airlines and Gulf Air were the first carriers in the world to sign an agreement with the PNA.

French 'peace convoy' brings aid to Gaza

RAFAH (AFP) — A "peace convoy" drove into the Gaza Strip on Monday bringing 100 tonnes of aid for the Palestinians from France. A dozen trucks draped in French and Palestinian flags crossed the border from Egypt at Rafah after two hours of checks by Israeli authorities. The French aid group Equilibre organised the convoy carrying goods ranging from school and sports equipment to wheelchairs, hospital beds and three mobile dental surgeries. Palestinian police escorted the trucks, a bus and a jeep from the border towards an official welcoming ceremony in Gaza City to be attended by Palestinian leader Yasser Arafat's wife Suha. The French government backed the convoy which left Paris on April 2.

Qatar cancels Peres visit

TEL AVIV (AFP) — Qatar bas called off the first visit to the Gulf state by Israeli Foreign Minister Shimoo Peres after news of the trip was leaked in the press, Israel radio reported on Monday. A foreign ministry spokesman refused to comment and underlined that no official announcemeot had been made about such a visit. Mr. Peres said on April 9 that he would shortly travel to two Gulf states, but did not name them. A foreign ministry official, who refused to be named, had said Qatar and Oman were the likely destinations. Prime Minister Yitzhak Rabin paid an unprecedented visit to Oman last December, but Israel's diplomatic breakthrough in the Arab World has since gone oo hold as the peace process has bogged down.

Israeli army probes sex film

TEL AVIV (AFP) — The Israeli army has launched an inquiry after a soldier secretly filmed a no-holds barred sex session with a female soldier and sbowed it to all the unit. "The military police are taking this affair very seriously and have opened an investigation," an army spokesman said. The girl made an official complaint alleging that an officer had demanded the film from her male colleague as the price for weekend leave from a base in Israel. The sex session took place in 1994, but she only found out recently that it had been filmed.

Washington to return $700m in hardware — Pakistan

ISLAMABAD (AP) — The United States will return about $700 million worth of military hardware to Pakistan, nearly five years after it was impounded, Foreign Minister Sardar Assef Ali said Monday.

Washington impounded the equipment, which included several Cobra helicopters, in 1990, when U.S. aid to Pakistan was dropped to protest its nuclear weapons programme.

The equipment was in the U.S. for repairs.

Prime Minister Benazir Bhutto secured Washington's promise to return the equipment during a 10-day visit to the U.S. which ended last week.

Ms. Bhutto, in meeting with U.S. senators, congressmen and President Bill Clinton, lobbied strongly for an end to sanctions against Pakistan, imposed under a U.S. law known as the Pressler Amendment. The law singles out Pakistao for punishment for its nuclear programme.

Pakistan argues that the law ignores the nuclear programme in neighbouring India, which exploded a nuclear device in 1974.

Pakistan maintains that its nuclear programme is necessary to counter India's. The South Asian neighbours have gone to war three times.

Mr. Assef Ali was not able to explain how Washington could return the equipment without breaking U.S. law, but he told reporters: "We have a commitment that it will be returned in the same condition that it went."

COLUMN

Bullying victim hangs himself in Japan

TOKYO (AFP) — A 13-year-old Japanese schoolboy hanged himself in western Japan after allegedly being bullied, the latest victim of a series of school violence cases, police said Monday. The boy, whose name was not disclosed, hanged himself with electric cable at his home Sunday, leaving a note saying that he was bullied by his classmates and senior students at Buzen municipal Suda Junior High School in Fukuoka. According to the note, the boy was beaten by nine other students, police said. School officials said they had not noticed that the student was bullied, adding that a local school board and police bad separately launched an investigation into the case. The Justice Ministry said in a report released Sunday that 36.1 per cent of junior high school students declare they bave been bullied and a third of them claim to have endured the ill-treatment without any protest. The survey was conducted late last year, covering 13,000 students at 119 schools across the nation. The death last November of Kiyoteru Okochi, who killed himself after his classmates extorted $11,000 from him, triggered a wave of child suicides in connection with school bullying.

Mystery over hole in Mandela's sock

JOHANNESBURG (AFP) — President Nelson Mandela wears socks with holes in them, a winning photograph in South Africa's press pictures of the year contest shows. Taken by photographer Ken Oosterbroek, who was shot dead while covering political violence in Tokoza black township east of bere last year, the pbotograpb shows Mr. Mandela kicking a hall and losing bis shoe in the process. The exposed presidential sock boasts a gaping hole throngh which two of Mandela's toes, including his large one, are protruding. Mandela's embarrassed couturiers were at a loss Monday to explain how the president came to be wearing a ventilated sock. Gail Kriel, household manager at Mr. Mandela's official home in Pretoria, Mahlambandopfu, said she was mystified. "The problem is that the president has three residences, so I would not know where he was on that day and who checked his clothes," she said. Couturier Yusuf Surtee, who has been dressing Mandela since he was released from apartheid's jails in 1990, said the president is very particular about his socks, wearing only imported nylon hosiery for his high blood pressure. The truth, Mr. Surtee believes, is that Mr. Mandela cut the sock to help relieve a swelling in his toe.

Chinese farmer jailed for buying college coed

SHANGHAI (R) — A rural court imprisoned a farmer for 15 years for buying a kidnapped woman college student to be his wife, a state newspaper said Saturday. Zhou Jianqi, a 28-year-old farmer from Yucheng county in central Henan province, was sentenced to 13 years for rape and two years for buying an abducted woman, Shanghai's Wen Hui Bao reported, reflecting a new policy of prosecuting buyers of abducted women. The woman, a second-year stodent of Chioese literature at an unnamed university in northwest China, was freed by police in December after seven months of what the paper called round-the-clock beatings, rape and humiliation. Mr. Zhou had bought her for 1,200 yuan ($142) from a man identified as Yang Jin, who remains at large, the subject of a police manhunt. The conviction was believed to be the first under a new policy pledging to imprison those who buy kidnapped women and children as well as their traffickers. State councillor Loo Gan annoonced the policy in March to toughen China's stand against bride-selling, a feudal scourge that was largely halted after the Communists took power in 1949 but has roared back during 16 years of market reform.